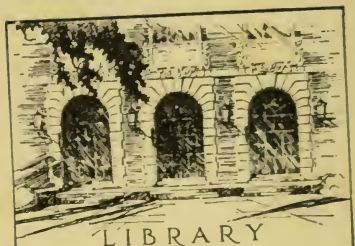
Sir Wm. G. Gordon Cumming Bart.



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MY DANISH SWEETHEART

A Novel

BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF
'THE WRECK OF THE GROSVENOR,' 'THE LIFE OF ADMIRAL LORD COLLINGWOOD,'
'A MARRIAGE AT SEA,' ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES
VOL. II.

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MY DANISH SWEETHEART.

CHAPTER I.

THE 'EARLY MORN.'

I TOLD my story, and the three fellows listened attentively. Their eyes glowed in the lamplight as they stared at me. The weak wind raised a pleasant buzzing noise at the cutwater, and the lugger stole in floating launches through the gloom over the long invisible heave of the Atlantic swell.

'Ah!' said the helmsman, when I had made an end, 'we heerd of that there Tintrenale lifeboat job when we was at Penzance. An' so you was her coxswain?'

'Were the people of the boat drowned?' cried I eagerly. 'Can you give me any news of them?'

'No, sir,' he answered; 'there was no particulars to hand when we sailed. All that we larnt was that a lifeboat had been stove alongside a vessel in Tintrenale Bay; and little wonder, tew, says I to my mates when I heerd it. Never remember the like of such a night as that there.'

'What was the name of the Dane again?' said one of the fellows seated opposite me, as he lighted a short clay pipe by the flame of a match that he dexterously shielded from the wind in his hand as though his fist was a lantern.

'The *Anine*,' I answered.

'A bit of a black barque, warn't she?' he continued. 'Capt'n with small eyes and a beard like a goat! Why, yes! it'll be that there barque, Tommy, that slipped two year ago. Pigsears Hall and Stickenup Adams and me had a nice little job along with her.'

'You are quite right,' said Helga, in a low voice; 'I was on board the vessel at the time. The captain was my father.'

'Oh, indeed, mum!' said the fellow who steered. 'An' he's gone dead! Poor old gentleman!'

'What is this boat?' said I, desiring to cut this sort of sympathy short.

'The *Airly Marn*,' said the helmsman.

'The *Early Morn!* And from what part of the coast, pray?'

'Why, ye might see, I think, sir, that she hails from Deal,' he answered. 'There's nothen resembling the likes of her coming from elsewhere that I knows of.'

'And what are you doing down in this part of the ocean?'

'Why,' said he, after spitting over the stern and passing his hand along his mouth, 'we're agoing to Australey.'

'Going *where?*' I cried, believing I had not correctly heard him, while Helga started from her drooping posture and turned to look at me.

'To Sydney, New South Wales, which is in Australey,' he exclaimed.

'In this small open boat?'

'This small open boat!' echoed one of the others. 'The *Airly Marn's* eighteen ton, and if she ben't big enough and good enough to carry three men to

Australey there's nothen afloat as is going to show her how to do it!'

By the light shed by the dimly burning lantern, where it stood in the bottom of the boat, I endeavoured to gather from their faces whether they spoke seriously, or whether, indeed, they were under the influence of earlier drams of liquor than the dose they had swallowed from our jar.

'Are you in earnest, men?' said I.

'Airnest!' cried the man at the tiller in a voice of astonishment, as though he wondered at my wonder. 'Why, to be sure we are! What's wrong with us that we shouldn't be agoing to Australey?'

I glanced at the short length of dark fabric, and up at the black square of lugsail.

'What is taking you to Australia in a Deal lugger?' said I.

The man styled Abraham by his mates answered: 'We're a-carrying this here craft out on a job for the gent that's bought her. There was three of us an' a boy, but the boy took sick at Penzance, and we came away without him.'

He paused. The man sitting next him continued in a deep voice :

'A gent as lives in Lunnon took this here *Airly Marn* over for a debt. Well, when he got her he didn't know what to do with her. There was no good a-leaving her to pine away on the beach, so he tarns to and puts her up to auction. Well, there was ne'er a bid.'

'Ne'er a bid !' echoed the man who was steering.

'Ne'er a bid, I says,' continued the other, 'and whoy? First of all, there ain't no money in Deal ; and next, the days of these luggers is nombered. Well, this here gent was called upon by an Australian friend who, gitting to hear of the *Airly Marn*, says he's a-willing to buy her *for* a sum. What that sum might be I'm not here *for* to know.'

'Fifty pound, I allow,' said the man named Tommy. 'Some says she was guv away. I've heerd speak of thirty pound. But fifty's what I call it.'

'Call it fifty !' exclaimed the fellow who steered.

'Well,' continued the first speaker, whose voice was peculiarly harsh, 'this here gent, having purchased the *Airly Marn*, comes down to Deal, and gives out

that he wants some men to carry her to Sydney. The matter was tarned over. How much would he give? Well, he'd give two hundred an' fifty pound, and them as undertook the job might make what shares they chose of the money. I was for making six shares. Abraham there says no, fower's enough. Tommy says three an' a boy. That's seventy-five pound a man, and twenty-five pound for the boy; but the boy being took sick, his share becomes ourn.'

'And you think seventy-five pound apiece pay enough for as risky an undertaking as was ever heard of?' cried I.

'Wish it were already airned,' said Abraham. 'Pay enough? Oy, and good monney, tew, in such times as these.'

'How far are we from the English coast?' asked Helga.

The man called Jacob, after a little silence, answered: 'Why, I dare say the Land's End 'll be about a hundred an' eighty mile off.'

'It would not take long to return!' she exclaimed. 'Will you not land us?'

'What! on the English coast, mum?' he cried.

I saw him peering earnestly at us, as though he would gather our condition by our attire.

'It's a long way back,' continued he; 'and supposing the wind,' he added, looking up at the sky, 'should head us?'

'If the gent would make it worth us men's while——' broke in Tommy.

'No, no!' exclaimed Abraham, 'we don't want to make nothen out of a fellow-creature's distress. We've saved ye, and that's a good job. Next thing we've got to do is to put ye aboard the first homeward bound vessel we falls in with. I'm for keeping all on. Ships is plentiful hereabout, and ye'll not be kept awaiting. But to up hellum for the English coast again——' I saw his head wag vehemently against the stars. 'It's a long way to Australey, master, and ne'er a man of us touches a penny-piece till we gits there.'

I sat considering a little. My immediate impulse was to offer the fellows a reward to land us. Then I thought—no! They may ask too much, and, indeed, whatever they might expect must prove too

much for me, to whom five pounds was a considerable sum, though, as I have told you, my mother's slender income was enough for us both. Besides, the money these men might ask would be far more fitly devoted to Helga, who had lost all save what she stood in—who was without a friend in England except myself and mother, who had been left by her father without a farthing saving some pitiful sum of insurance-money, which she would not get for many a long day, and who, brave heart! would, therefore, need my mother's purse to refurnish her wardrobe and embark her for her Danish home, if, indeed, there would *now* be a home for her at Kolding.

These considerations passed with the velocity of thought through my mind. On the other hand, we were no longer aboard a stationary raft, but in a nimble little lugger that every hour was carrying us into a new prospect of ocean; and we might be sure, therefore, of speedily falling in with a homeward-bound steamer that would convey us to England in a tenth of the time the lugger would occupy, very much more comfortably too, and at the cost of a few shillings, so to speak. Then, again, I felt too grateful

for our preservation, too glad and rejoiceful over our deliverance from the dreadful future that had just now lain before us, to remonstrate with the men, to oppose their wishes to pursue their course, to utter a word, in short, that might make them suppose I did not consider our mere escape from the raft good fortune enough.

'Surely it would not take them very long,' Helga whispered in my ear, 'to sail this boat back to Penzance?'

I repeated, in a voice inaudible to the others, the reflections which had occurred to me.

'Why, see there now!' bawled one of the boatmen, pointing with a shadowy hand into the dusk over the lee quarter. 'There's plenty of the likes of her to fall in with; only *she's* agoing the wrong way.'

I peered, and spied the green side and white mast-head lanterns of a steamer propelling along the water at about a quarter of a mile distant. I could faintly distinguish the loom of her black length, like a smear of ink upon the obscurity, and the line of her smoke against the stars, with now and again a little leap of furnace-light at the funnel-mouth that, while it hung

there, might have passed for the blood-red visage of the moon staring out of a stormy sky.

'See, Helga!' I cried; 'there are many like her, as this man says. In a few hours, please God, we may be safe aboard such another!' And I sank my voice to add, 'We cannot do better than wait. Our friends here will be glad to get rid of us. No fear of their detaining us a moment longer than can be helped.'

'Yes, you are right,' she answered; 'but I wish to quickly return for your sake—for your mother's sake, Hugh.'

Her soft utterance of my name fell pleasantly upon my ear. I felt for her hand and pressed it, and whispered, 'A little patience, and we shall find ourselves at home again. All is well with us now.'

The lights to leeward silently glided ahead, and turned black upon the bow. One of the boatmen yawned with the roar of a cow.

'Nothen to keep me out of my bunk now, I allow,' said he. 'No more rafts to run into, I hope.'

'I should like to get this lady under shelter,' said I.

'That's easily done!' exclaimed Abraham. 'There's a nice little fore-peak and a bunk in it at her sarvice.'

Helga hastily explained that she had had rest enough. I perceived that the delicacy of our Deal friends did not go to the length of observing that while Helga occupied the fore-peak it must be hers, and hers only; but the discussion of that point was out of the question now; so she stayed where she was, the boatman that had yawned went forward, and in a few minutes his snoring came along in a sound like the grating of a boat's keel over the shingle of his native town.

These darkest hours of the night slowly passed. The breeze blew, the keen stem of the lugger ripped through the quiet heave of the ocean, and I waited for the dawn, never doubting that Helga and I would be out of the boat and aboard some homeward-bounder ere we should have counted another half-score hours. The homely chat of the two men, their queer 'longshore phrases, the rough sympathy they sought to convey by their speech, were delightful to listen to. Such had been my experiences, that, though five days comprised them, it seemed as if I had been six months from home. The talk mainly concerned this daring, extraordinary voyage to Aus-

tralia, in what was truly no more than an open boat. The excitement of delight over our rescue was in a measure spent. I could think calmly, and attend with interest to other considerations than our preservation, our sufferings, and, in short, ourselves. And what could interest me more than this singular undertaking on the part of three boatmen?

I inquired what food they carried.

'Whoy,' says Abraham, 'we've got beef and pork and ship's bread and other wittles arter that sort.'

'Shall you touch at any ports?'

'Oy, if the need arises, master.'

'Need arises! You are bound to run short of food and water!'

'There's a plenty of ships to fall in with at sea, master, to help us along.'

'How long do you reckon on taking to make the run?'

'Fower or foive month,' answered Abraham.

'Oy, an' perhaps six,' said Jacob.

'Who is skipper?' said I.

'There aren't no degrees here,' answered Abraham;

'leastways, now that the boy's gone sick and's left behoind.'

'But which of you is navigator, then?'

'Oy am,' said Abraham; 'that's to say, I've got a quadrant along with me, and know how to tell at noon what o'clock it is. That's what's tarmed hascertaining the latitude. As to what's called longitude, she's best left to the log-line.'

'So she is,' said Jacob.

'And you have no doubt of accurately striking the port of Sydney without troubling yourselves about your longitude?'

'Ne'er a doubt,' said Abraham.

'Or if so be as a doubt should come up, then heave the log, says I,' broke in Jacob.

Their manner of speaking warned me to conceal my amazement, that under other conditions could not have been without merriment. They told me they had left Penzance on the morning of Monday, while it was still blowing heavily. 'But we saw that the breeze,' Abraham said, 'was agoing to fail, and so there was no call to stop for the wedder;' yet they had hardly run the land out of sight when they

sprang their mast in the jump of a very hollow sea. 'There was no use trying to ratch back agin that sea and breeze,' said Abraham; 'so we stepped our spare mast and laid the wounded chap in his place; but if the wedder be as bad off the Cape as I've heerd talk of, I allow we'll be needing a rig-out o' spars if we're to reach Australey; and what'll have to be done 'll be to fall in with some wessel as'll oblige us.'

Considering they were seafaring men, this prodigious confidence in luck and chance was not less wonderful than the venture they were upon. But it was for me to question and listen, not to criticise.

'They will never reach Australia,' Helga whispered.

'They are English seamen,' said I softly.

'No, Hugh—boatmen,' said she, giving me my name as easily as though we had been brother and sister. 'And what will they do without longitude?'

'Grope their way,' I whispered, 'after the manner of the early mariners who achieved everything in the shape of seamanship and discovery in "barkes," as they called them, compared to which this lugger is as a thousand-ton ship to a Gravesend wherry.'

The two boatmen were holding a small hoarse argument touching the superiority of certain galley-punts belonging to Deal, when the dawn broke along the port-beam of the lugger. The sea turned an ashen green, and throbbed darkening to the gray wall of eastern sky, against which it washed in a line of inky blackness. I sprang on to a thwart to look ahead on either bow, and Helga stood up beside me; and as upon the barque, and as upon the raft, so now we stood together sweeping the iron-gray sky and the dark line of horizon for any flaw that might denote a vessel. But the sea stretched bald to its recesses the compass round.

The heavens in the east brightened, and the sea-line changed into a steely whiteness, but this delicate distant horizontal gleam of water before sunrise gave us sight of nothing.

'Anything to be seen, sir?' cried Abraham.

'Nothing,' I answered, dismounting from the thwart.

'Well, there's all day before ye,' said Jacob, who had taken the helm.

Now that daylight was come, my first look was at

Helga, to see how she had borne the bitter time that was passed. Her eyelids were heavy, her cheeks of a deathlike whiteness, her lips pale, and in the tender hollow under each eye lay a greenish hue, resembling the shadow a spring leaf might fling. It was clear that she had been secretly weeping from time to time during the dark hours. She smiled when our eyes met, and her face was instantly sweetened by the expression into the gentle prettiness I had first found in her.

I next took a survey of my new companions. The man styled Abraham was a sailorly-looking fellow, corresponding but indifferently with one's imagination of the conventional 'longshoreman. He had sharp features, a keen, iron-gray, seawardly eye, and a bunch of reddish beard stood forth from his chin. He was dressed in pilot-cloth, wore earrings, and his head was encased in a sugar-loafed felt hat, built after the fashion of a theatrical bandit's.

Jacob, on the other hand, was the most faithful copy of a Deal boatman that could have been met afloat. His face was flat and broad, with a skin stained in places of a brick-red. He had little, merry, but

rather dim blue eyes, and suggested a man who would be able, without great effort of memory, to tell you how many public-houses there were in Deal, taking them all round. He had the whitest teeth I had ever seen in a sailor, and the glance of them through his lips seemed to fix an air of smiling upon his face. His attire consisted of a fur-cap, forced so low down upon the head that it obliged his ears to stand out; a yellow oilskin jumper and a pair of stout fearnaught trousers, the ends of which were packed into half-wellington boots.

The third man, named Thomas or Tommy, still continued out of sight, in the fore-peak. One will often see at a glance as much as might occupy some pages to even briefly describe. In a few turns of the eye I had taken in these two men and their little ship. The boat seemed to me a very fine specimen of the Deal lugger. Her fore-peak consisted of a forecastle, the deck of which was carried in the shape of a platform several feet abaft the bulkhead, which limited the sleeping compartment, and under this pent-house or break were stored the anchors, cables, and other gear belonging to the little vessel. In the middle of the

boat, made fast by chains, was a stove, with a box under the 'raft,' as the forecastle-deck is called, in which were kept the cooking utensils. I noticed fresh water casks stowed in the boat's bilge, and a harness-cask for the meat near the fore-peak. Right amidships lay a little fat punt, measuring about fourteen feet long, and along the sides of the thwarts were three sweeps or long oars, the fore-mast that had been 'sprung,' and a spare bowsprit. This equipment I took in with the swift eye of a man who was at heart a boatman.

A noble boat, indeed, for Channel cruising, for the short ragged seas of our narrow waters. But for the voyage to Australia! I could only stare and wonder.

The big lug-sail was doing its work handsomely; the breeze was out on the starboard quarter—a pleasant wind, but with a hardness in the face of the sky to windward, a rigidity of small compacted, high-hanging cloud with breaks of blue between, showing of a wintry keenness when the sun soared, that promised a freshening of the wind before noon. Under the steadfast drag of her lug, the light, bright-sided

boat was buzzing through it merrily, with a spitting of foam off either bow, and a streak on either side of wool-white water creaming into her wake, that streamed, rising and falling, far astern.

Had her head been pointing the other way, with a promise of the dusky gray of the Cornish coast to loom presently upon the sea-line, I should have found something delightful in the free, floating, airy motion of the lugger sweeping over the quiet hills of swell, her weather-side caressed by the heads of the little seas crisply running along with her in a sportive, racing way. But the desolation of the ocean lay as an oppression upon my spirits. I counted upon the daybreak revealing several sail, and here and there the blue streak of a steamer's smoke; but there was nothing of the sort to be seen, while every hour of such nimble progress as the lugger was now making must to a degree diminish our chances of falling in with homeward-bound craft; that is to say, we were sure, sooner or later, to meet with a ship going to England; but the farther south we went the longer would be the intervals between the showing of ships by reason of the navigation scattering as it opened

out into the North Atlantic; and so, though I never doubted that we should be taken off the lugger and carried home, yet as I looked around this vacant sea I was depressed by the fear that some time might pass before this would happen, and my thoughts went to my mother—how she might be supposing me dead and mourning over me as lost to her for ever, and how, if I could quickly return to her, I should be able to end her heartache and perhaps preserve her life; for I was her only child, and that she would fret over me even to the breaking of her heart, I feared, despite her having sanctioned my going out to save life.

Yet, when I looked at Helga, and reflected upon what her sufferings had been and what her loss was, and noted the spirit that still shone nobly in her steadfast gaze, and was expressed in the lines of her lips, I felt that I was acting my part as a man but poorly, in suffering my spirits to droop. This time yesterday we were upon a raft, from which the first rise of sea must have swept us. It was the hard stare of the north-westerly sky that caused me to think of this time yesterday; and with something of a shiver

and a long deep breath of gratitude for the safety that had come to us with this little fabric buoyant under our feet, I broke away from my mood of dulness with a half-smile at the two homely boatmen, who sat staring at Helga and at me.

'The lady looks but poorly,' said Abraham, with his eyes fixed upon Helga, though he addressed me. 'Some people has their allowance of grief sarved out all at once. I earnestly hope, lady, that life's agoing to luff up with you now, and lead ye on a course that won't take long to bring ye to the port of joyfulness.'

He nodded at her emphatically, with as much sympathy in his countenance as his weather-tanned flesh would suffer him to exhibit.

'We have had a hard time,' she answered gently.

'Much too hard for any girl to go through,' said I. 'Men, you must know this lady to be a complete sailor. She can take the wheel; she can sound the well; she has a nerve of steel at a moment that would send a good many who consider themselves stout-hearted to their prayers. It is not the usage of the sea, Abraham, that makes her look poorly, as you say.'

I noticed Jacob leaning forward with his hands upon his knees, staring at her. Suddenly he smacked his leg with the sound of a pistol-shot.

'Why, yes!' he cried: 'now I'm sure of it. Wasn't you once a boy, mum?'

'What!' cried Abraham, turning indignantly upon him.

A faint blush entered Helga's face.

'What I mean is,' continued Jacob, 'when I last see ye, you was dressed up as a boy!'

'Yes,' said I, 'yes. And what then?'

'Whoy, then,' he cried, fetching his leg another violent slap, 'Pigsears Hall owes me a gallon o' beer. When we was aboard the Dane,' he continued, addressing Abraham and talking with 'longshore vehemence, 'I cotched sight of a boy that I says to myself, thinks I, is as sartain surely a female as that the Gull lightship's painted red. I told Pigsears Hall to look. "Gal in your eye!" says he. "Bet ye a gallon of ale, Jacob, she's as much a boy as Barney Parson's Willie!" But we was too busy to argue, and we left the ship without thinking more about it. Now I'm reminded, and I'm right, and I calls ye to witness,

Abraham, so that Pigsears mayn't haul off from his wager.'

To change the subject, I said abruptly, 'You men seem to have some queer names among you. Pigsears Hall! Could any parson be got to christen a man so?'

''Taint his right name,' said Abraham. 'It's along of his ears that he's got that title. There's Stickenup Adams; that's 'cause he holds his thin nose so high. Then there's Paper-collar Joe; that's 'cause he likes to be genteel about the neck. We've all got nicknames. But in a voyage to Australey we give ourselves the tarms our mothers knew us by.'

'What is your name?' said I.

'Abraham Vise,' said he.

'Wise?'

'*I* calls it Vise,' said he, looking a little disconcerted. 'It's wrote with a *W*.'

'And your shipmates?'

'Him,' he answered, indicating his comrade by jerking his chin at him, 'is Jacob Minikin. Him that's forrards is Tommy Budd.' He paused, with

his eyes fixed upon Helga. 'Jacob,' said he, addressing his mate while he steadfastly regarded the girl, 'I've been a-thinking, if so be as the gentleman and lady aren't going to be put aboard a homeward-bounder in a hurry, how's she to sleep? Tell ye what it is,' said he slowly, looking around at Jacob; 'if to-night finds 'em aboard us we'll have to tarn out of the forepeak. There's a good enough bed for the likes of us men under that there raft,' said he, pointing to the wide recess that was roofed by the overhanging of the deck of the fore-peak. 'The lady looks as if nothen short of a twenty-four hours' spell of sound sleep was going to do her good. But, of course, as I was saying,' and now he was addressing me, 'you and her may be aboard another craft, homeward bound, before the night comes.'

'I thank you, on behalf of the lady, for your proposal, Abraham,' said I. 'She wants rest, as you say; but privacy must naturally be a condition of her resting comfortably in your fore-peak. Six hours would suffice——'

'Oh! she can lie there all night,' said Jacob.

At this moment the third man made his appear-

ance. He rose thrusting through a little square hatch, and, with true 'longshore instincts, took a slow survey of the sea, with an occasional rub of his wrist along his eyes, before coming aft. He glanced at Helga and me carelessly, as though we had long become familiar features of the lugger to his mind, and, giving Abraham a nod, exclaimed, with another look round the sea, 'A nice little air o' wind out this marning.'

This fellow was a middle-aged man, probably forty-five. His countenance was of a somewhat sour cast, his eyebrows thick and of an iron-gray, and his eyes, deep-seated under them, gazed forth between lids whose rims were so red that they put a fancy into one of their being slowly eaten away by fire, as a spark bites into tinder. The sulky curl of mouth expressed the born marine grumbler. His headgear was of fur, like Jacob's; but I observed that he was dressed in a long coat, that had manifestly been cut for or worn by a parson. Under the flapping tails of this coat were exhibited a pair of very loose fearnaught trousers, terminating in a pair of large, gouty, square-toed shoes.

'What about breakfast?' said he. 'Ain't it toime to loight the fire?'

'Why, yes,' answered Abraham, 'and I dessay,' said he, looking at me, 'ye won't be sorry to get a mouthful of wittles.'

The sour-faced man, named Tommy, went forward, and was presently busy in chopping up a piece of wood.

'There are some good rashers to be had out of those hams you took from the raft,' said I; 'you will find the canned meat pleasant eating too. While you are getting breakfast I'll explore your fore-peak, with your permission.'

'Sartinly,' answered Abraham.

'Come along, Helga,' said I; and we went forward.

We dropped through the hatch, and found ourselves in a little gloomy interior, much too shallow to stand erect in. There were four bunks, so contrived as to serve as seats and lockers as well as beds. There were no mattresses, but in each bunk was a little pile of blankets.

'A noble sea-parlour, Helga!' said I, laughing.

'It is better than the raft,' she answered.

'Ay, indeed! but for all that not so good as to render us unwilling to leave this little lugger. You will never be able to sleep in one of these holes?'

'Oh yes,' she answered, with a note of cheerfulness in her voice; 'but I hope there may be no occasion. I shall not want to sleep till the night comes, and before it comes we may be in another ship, journeying home—to your home, I mean,' she added, with a sigh.

'And not more mine than yours, so long as it will please you to make it yours. And now,' said I, 'that we may be as comfortable as possible, where are our friends' toilet conveniences? Their washbasin is, no doubt, the ocean over the side, and I suspect a little lump of grease, used at long intervals, serves them for the soap they need. But there is plenty of refreshment to be had out of a salt-water rinsing of the face. Stay you here, and I will hand you down what is to be found.'

I regained the deck, and asked one of the men to draw me a bucket of salt-water. I then asked Abraham for a piece of sail-cloth to serve as a towel.

'Sail-cloth!' he cried. 'I'll give ye the real thing,' and, sliding open a locker in the stern sheets, he extracted a couple of towels.

'Want any soap?' said he.

'Soap!' cried I. 'Have you such a thing?'

'Why, what d'ye think we are?' called the sour-faced man Tommy, who was kneeling at the little stove and blowing into it to kindle some chips of wood. 'How's a man to shave without soap?'

'Want a looking-glass?' said Abraham, handing me a lump of marine soap as he spoke.

'Thank you,' said I.

'And here's a comb,' said he, producing out of his trousers pocket a knife-shaped affair that he opened into a large brass comb. 'Anything more?'

'What more have you?' said I.

'Nothen, saving a razor,' said he.

This I did not require. I carried the bucket and the little bundle of unexpected conveniences to the hatch, and called to Helga.

'Here am I, rich in spoils,' said I softly. 'These boatmen are complete dandies. Here is soap, here are towels, here is a looking-glass, and here is a comb,'

and having handed her these things I made my way aft again.

'We han't asked your name yet, sir,' said Abraham, who was at the tiller again, while the other two were busy at the stove getting the breakfast.

'Hugh Tregarthen,' said I.

'Thank ye,' said he; 'and the lady?'

'Helga Nielsen.'

He nodded approvingly, as though pleased with the sound of the name.

'She's a nice little gal, upon my word!' said he; 'too good to belong to any other country nor Britain. Them Danes gets hold of the English tongue wonderful fast. Take a Swede or a Dutchman: it's *yaw yaw* with them to the end of their time. But I've met Danes as ye wouldn't know from Deal men, so fust-class was their speech.' He slowly carried his chin to his shoulder, to take a view of the weather astern, and then, fastening his eyes with 'longshore leisureliness upon my face—and I now noticed for the first time that he slightly squinted—he said, 'It's a good job that we fell in with 'ee, Mr. Tregarthen; for if so be as you two had kept all on washing about

on that there raft till noon to-day—and I give ye till noon—ye'd be wanting no man's help nor prayers afterwards. It's agoing to blow.'

'Yes,' said I, 'there's wind enough in that sky there; in fact it's freshening a bit already, isn't it?' For I now perceived the keener feathering and sharper play upon the waters, and the harder and broader racing of the yeast that was pouring away from either quarter of the lugger. 'There's been a shift of the wind, too, I think,' I added, trying to catch a sight of the dusky interior of a little compass-box that stood on the seat close against Abraham.

'Yes, it's drawed norradly,' he answered. 'I ain't sorry, for it's like justifying of me for not setting ye ashore. I *did* think, when the young lady asked me to steer for England, that I wasn't acting the part of a humane man in refusing of her, and for keeping all on stretching the distance between you and your home. But I reckoned upon the wind drawing ahead for a homeward-bound course, and now it *has;* so that if we was to keep you a week and get ye aboard a steamer at the end of it you'd stand to get home

sooner than if we was to down hellum now and start aratching for your coast.'

'We owe our lives to you,' said I cordially. 'Not likely that we could wish to inconvenience you by causing your lugger to swerve by so much as a foot from her course.'

CHAPTER II.

HEADING SOUTH.

JUST then Helga rose through the hatch. I caught an expression of admiration in Abraham's face at her floating, graceful manner of passing through the little aperture.

'She might ha' been born and bred in a lugger,' said he to me in a hoarse whisper. 'Whoy, with the werry choicest and elegantest o' females it 'ud be no more 'n an awkward scramble to squeeze through that hole. Has she wings to her feet? I didn't see her use her elbows, did you? And, my precious limbs! how easily she takes them thwarts!' by which he meant her manner of passing over the seats of the boat.

Perhaps now I could find heart to admire the girl's figure. Certainly I had had but small spirit for ob-

servation of that kind aboard the raft, and *there* only had her shape been revealed to me; for in the barque no hint was conveyed by her boyish attire of the charms it rudely and heavily concealed. The sparkling brine with which she had refreshed her face had put something of life into her pale cheeks, and there was a faint bloom in her complexion that was slightly deepened by a delicate glow as she smiled in response to my smile, and took a seat at my side.

'Them rashers smells first-class,' said Abraham, with a hungry snuffle. 'It must be prime ham as 'll steal to the nose, while cooking, dead in the vind's eye.'

'Before breakfast is ready,' said I, 'I'll imitate Miss Nielsen's example;' and with that I went forward, drew a bucket of water, dropped into the forepeak, and enjoyed the most refreshing wash that I can call to mind. One needs to be shipwrecked to appreciate these seeming trifles. For my own part, I could scarcely realize that, saving my oilskin-coat, I had not removed a stitch of my clothes since I had run from my mother's house to the lifeboat. I came into the light that streamed into the little hatch, and

took a view of myself in the looking-glass, and was surprised to find how trifling were the marks I bore of the severe, I may truly say the desperate, experiences I had passed through. My eyes retained their brightness, my cheeks their colour. I was bearded, and therefore able to emerge triumphantly from a prolonged passage of marine disaster without requiring to use a razor. It is the stubbled chin that completes the gauntness of the shipwrecked countenance.

I have a lively recollection of that breakfast—our first meal aboard the *Early Morn*. Rashers of ham hissed in the frying-pan : each of us grasped a thick china mug full of black coffee ; the bag of biscuits we had brought with us from the barque lay yawning at our feet, and everyone helped himself. The boatmen chawed away solemnly, as though they were masticating quids of tobacco, each man falling to with a huge clasp-knife that doubtless communicated a distinct flavour of tarred hemp to whatever the blade came in contact with. Indeed, they cut up their victuals as they might cut up tobacco : working at it with extended arms and backward-leaning posture, putting bits of the food together as though to fit

their mouths, and then whipping the morsel on the tips of their knives through their leathery lips with a slow chaw-chaw of their under-jaws that made one think of a cow busy with the cud. Their leisurely behaviour carried me in imagination to the English seaside; for these were the sort of men who, swift as might be their movements in an hour of necessity, were the most loafing of loungers in times of idleness—men who could not stand upright, who polished the hardest granite by constant friction with their fearnaught trousers, but who were yet the fittest central objects imaginable for that prospect of golden sand, calm blue sea, marble-white pier and terraces of cliff lifting their summits of sloping green high into the sweet clear atmosphere which one has in mind when one thinks of the holiday coast of the old home.

The man named Thomas, having cooked the breakfast, had taken the helm, but the obligation of steering did not interfere with his eating. In fact, I observed that he steered with the small of his back, helping the helm now and again by a slight touch of the tiller with his elbow, while he fell to on the plate upon his knee. For my part, I was as hungry as a

wolf, and fed heartily, as the old voyagers would have said. Helga, too, did very well; indeed, her grief had half starved her; and mighty glad was I to see this fair and dainty little heart of oak making a meal, for it was a good assurance in its way that she was fighting with her sorrow and was beginning to look at the future without the bitter sadness that was in her gaze yesterday.

But while we sat eating and chatting, the wind continued to slowly freshen; the foresheet had tautened to the rigidity of iron, and now and again the lugger made a plunge that would send a bright mass of white water rolling away from either bow. The wind, however, was almost over the stern, and we bowled along before it on a level keel, save when some scend of sea, lifting her under the quarter, threw the little fabric along with a slanting mast and a sharper drum-like rolling out of the heart of the distended canvas as the lugger recovered herself with a saucy swing to starboard.

'Who says we ain't going to reach Australey?' exclaimed Abraham, pulling out a short pipe and filling it, with a slow, satisfied grin at the yeasty dazzle over

the lee-rail, to which the eye, fastened upon it, was stooped at times so close that the brain seemed to dance to the wild and brilliant gyrations of the milky race.

'A strange fancy,' said I, 'for a man to buy a Deal lugger for Sydney Bay.'

'If it warn't for strange fancies,' said Thomas, with a sour glance, 'it 'ud be a poor look-out for the likes of such as me.'

'Tell ye what I'm agoing to miss in this here ramble,' exclaimed Jacob. 'That's beer, mates!'

'Beer 'll come the sweeter for the want of it,' said Abraham, with a sympathetic face. 'Still, I must say, when a man feels down there's nothin' like a point o' beer.'

'What's drunk in your country, mum?' said Jacob.

'Everything that you drink in England,' Helga answered.

'But I allow,' grunted Thomas, fixing a morose eye upon the horizon, 'that the Scandinavians, as the Danes and likevise the Svedes, along with other nations, incloodin' of the Roosians, is called, ben't so particular in the matter o' drink as the English, to say

nothen o' Deal men. Whoy,' he added, with a voice of contempt, 'they're often content to do without it. Capt'ns and owners know that. The Scandinavian fancies is so cheap that you may fill your fo'k'sle with twenty sailors on tarms that'ud starve six Englishmen.'

'The Danes are good sailors,' said Helga, looking at him, 'and they are the better sailors because they are a sober people.'

'I've got nothen to say agin 'em as sailors,' retorted Thomas; 'but they ships too cheap, mum—they ships too cheap.'

'They will take what an Englishman will take!' exclaimed Helga, with a little sparkle in her eye.

'So they will, mum—so they will!' exclaimed Abraham soothingly. 'The Dane's a fust-class sailor and a temperate man, and when Tommy there'll give me an opportunity of saying as much for *him* I'll proclaim it.'

I was standing up, peering round the sea, for perhaps the tenth time that morning, when, happening to have my eyes directed astern, as the lugger ran in one of her graceful, buoyant, soaring launches to the summit of a little surge—for the freshening of the

wind had already set the water running in heaps, noticeable even now for weight and velocity aboard that open craft of eighteen tons, though from the height of a big ship the seas would have been no more than a pleasant wrinkling of the northerly swell —I say, happening to look astern at that moment, I caught sight of a flake of white poised starlike over the rim of the ocean. The lugger sank, then rose again, and again I spied that bland moonlike point of canvas.

'A sail!' said I; 'but unhappily in chase of us. Always, in such times as these, whatever shows shows at the wrong end.'

Abraham stood up to look, saw the object, and seated himself in silence.

'How are you heading the lugger?' cried I.

'Sou'-sou'-west,' he answered.

'What course have you determined on?' said I, anxious to gather from the character of his navigation what might be our chances of falling in with the homeward-bounders.

'Why, keep on heading as we go,' he answered, 'till we strike the north-east trades, which are to be

met with a-blowing at about two-and-twenty degrees no'the; then bring the *Airly Mary* to about south. When the hequator's crossed,' continued he, smoking, with his head well sunk between his coat-collars, 'we strikes off to the west'ard again for the hisland of Trinidad—not to soight it; but when we gits into its latitude we starboards for the south-east trades, and goes away for the Cape o' Good Hope. Are ye anything of a navigator yourself?'

'No,' I answered, which was true enough, though I was not so wholly ignorant of the art of conducting a ship from one place to another, as not to listen with the utmost degree of astonishment to this simple boatman's programme of the voyage to Australia.

He whipped open the same locker from which he had taken the rough toilet articles, and extracted a little blue-backed track-chart of the world, which he opened and laid across his knees.

'I suppose ye can read, sir?' said he, not at all designing to be offensive, as was readily gatherable from his countenance, merely putting the question, as I easily saw, out of his experience of the culture of Deal beach.

Helga laughed.

'Yes, I can read a little,' said I.

'Well, then,' said he, laying a twisted stump of thumb upon the chart, 'here's the whole blooming woyage wrote down by Capt'n Israel Brown, of the *Turk's Head*, a wessel that was in the Downs when my mates and me agreed for to undertake this job. He took me into his cabin, and pulling out this here chart he marked these lines as you see down upon it. "There, Abraham!" he says, says he; "you steer according to these here directions, and your lugger 'll hit Sydney Bay like threading a needle."'

I looked at the chart, and discovered that the course marked upon it would carry the lugger to the westward of Madeira. It was not suggested by the indications that any port was to be touched at, or, indeed, any land to be made until Table Bay was reached. The two men, Jacob and Tommy, were eyeing me eagerly, as though thirsting for an argument. This determined me not to hazard any criticism. I merely said:

'I understood from you, I think, that you depend upon ships supplying you with your wants.'

Abraham responded with an emphatic nod.

Well, thought I, I suppose the fellows know what they are about; but in the face of that chart I could not but feel mightily thankful that Helga and I stood the chance of being transhipped long before experience should have taught the men that charity was as little to be depended upon at sea as ashore. They talked of five months, and even of six, in making the run, and who was to question such a possibility when the distance, the size of the boat, the vast areas of furious tempest and of rotting calm which lay ahead, were considered? The mere notion of the sense of profound tediousness, of sickening wearisomeness, which must speedily come, sent a shudder through me when I looked at the open craft, whose length might have been measured by an active jumper in a couple of bounds, in which there was no space for walking, and, for the matter of that, not very much room for moving, what with the contiguity of the thwarts and the incumbrances of lockers, spare masts and oars, the pump, the stove, the little deck forward, the boat, and the rest of the furniture.

I asked Abraham how they managed in the matter of keeping a look-out.

'One tarns in for four hours, and t'other two keep the watch, one a-steering for two hours and the other relieving him arterwards.'

'That gives you eight hours on deck and four hours' sleep,' said Helga.

'Quite right, mum.'

'Eight hours of deck is too much,' she cried; 'there should have been four of you. Then it would have been watch and watch.'

'Ay, and another share to bring down ourn,' exclaimed Thomas.

'Mr. Abraham,' said Helga, 'Mr. Tregarthen has told you that I can steer. I promise you that while I am at the helm the lugger's course shall be as true as a hair, as you sailors say. I can also keep a look-out. Many and many a time have I kept watch on board my father's ship. While we are with you, you must let me make one of your crew.'

'I, too, am reckoned a middling hand at the helm,' said I; 'so while we are here, there will be five of us to do the lugger's work.'

Abraham looked at the girl admiringly.

'You're werry good, lady,' he said: 'I dorn't doubt

your willingness. On board a ship I shouldn't doubt your capacity; but the handling of these here luggers is a job as needs the eddication of years. Us Deal boatmen are born into the work, and them as ain't, commonly perish when they tries their hand at it.'

''Sides, it's a long woyage,' growled Thomas, 'and if more shares is to be made of it I'm for going home.'

'You're always a-thinking of the shares, Tommy,' cried Abraham; 'the gent and the lady means nothing but koindness. No, mum, thanking you all the same,' continued he, giving Helga an ungainly but respectful sea-bow. 'You're shipwrecked passengers, and our duty is to put ye in the way of getting home. That's what you expect of us; and what we expect of you is that you'll make your minds easy and keep comfortable ontil ye leave us.'

I thanked him warmly, and then stood up to take another look at the vessel that was overhauling us astern. She was rising fast, already dashing the sky past the blue ridges of the ocean with a broad gleam of canvas.

'Helga,' said I softly, 'there's a large ship rapidly coming up astern. Shall we ask these men to put us aboard her?'

She fastened her pretty blue eyes thoughtfully upon me.

'She is not going home, Hugh.'

'No, nor is the lugger. That ship should make us a more comfortable home than this little craft, until we can get aboard another vessel.'

She continued to eye me thoughtfully, and then said: 'This lugger will give us a better chance of getting home quickly than that ship. These men will run down to a vessel, or even chase one to oblige us and to get rid of us; but a ship like that,' said she, looking astern, 'is always in a hurry when the wind blows, and is rarely very willing to back her topsail. And then think what a swift ship she must be, to judge from her manner of overtaking us! The swifter, the worse for us, Hugh—I mean, the farther you will be carried away from your home.'

She met my eyes with a faint wistful smile upon her face, as though she feared I would think her forward.

'You are right, Helga,' said I. 'You are every inch a sailor. We will stick to the lugger.'

Abraham went forward to lie down, after instructing Jacob to arouse him at a quarter before noon, that he might shoot the sun. Thomas sat with a sulky countenance at the helm, and Jacob overhung the rail close against the foresheet, his chin upon his hairy wrist, and his gaze levelled at the horizon, after the mechanical fashion of the 'longshoreman afloat. At intervals the wind continued to freshen in small 'guns,' to use the expressive old term—in little blasts or shocks of squall, which flashed with a shriek into the concavity of the lug, leaving the wind steady again, but stronger, with a higher tone in the moan of it above and a stormier boiling of the waters round about the lugger, that seemed to be swirling along as though a comet had got her in tow, though this sense of speed was no doubt sharpened by the closeness of the hissing white waters to the rail. Yet shortly after ten o'clock the ship astern had risen to her waterline, and was picking us up as though, forsooth, we were riding to a sea-anchor.

A nobler ocean picture never delighted a lands-

man's vision. The snow-white spires of the oncoming ship swayed with solemn and stately motions to the underrun of the quartering sea. She had studding-sails out to starboard, one mounting to another in a very pyramid of soft milky cloths, and her wings of jibs, almost becalmed, floated airily from masthead to bowsprit and jibboom-end like symmetric fragments of fleecy cloud rent from the stately mass of fabric that soared behind them brilliant in the flashing sunshine. Each time our lugger was hove upwards I would spy the dazzling smother of the foam, which the shearing cutwater of the clipper, driven by a power greater than steam, was piling to the hawse-pipes, even to the very burying of the forecastle-head to some of the majestic structure's curtseys.

Helga watched her with clasped hands and parted lips and glowing blue eyes full of spirit and delight. The glorious sea-piece seemed to suspend memory in her; all look of grief was gone out of her face; her very being appeared to have blent itself with that windy, flying, triumphant oceanic show, and her looks of elation—the abandonment of herself to the impulse and the spirit of what she viewed, assured me

that if ever old Ocean owned a daughter, its child was the pale, blue-eyed, yellow-haired maiden who sat with rapt gaze and swift respiration at my side.

Jacob, who had been eyeing the ship listlessly, suddenly started into an air of life and astonishment.

'Whoy, Tommy,' cried he, grasping the rail and staring over the stern, out of his hunched shoulders, 'pisen me, mate, if she ain't the *Thermoppilly!*'

Thomas slowly and sulkily turned his chin upon his shoulder, and after a short stare, put his back again on the ship, and said: 'Yes, that's the *Thermoppilly*, right enough!'

'The *Thermopylæ?*' said I. 'Do you mean the famous Aberdeen clipper?'

'Ay,' cried Jacob, 'that's her! Ain't she a beauty? My oye, what a run! What's agoing to touch her? Look at them mastheads! Tall enough to foul the stars, Tommy, and *de*-range the blooming solar system.'

He beat his thigh in his enjoyment of the sight, and continued to deliver himself of a number of

nautical observations expressive of his admiration and of the merits of the approaching vessel.

She had slightly shifted her helm, as I might take it, to have a look at us, and would pass us close. The thunder of the wind in her towering heights came along to our ears in the sweep of the air in a low continuous note of thunder. You could hear the boiling of the water bursting and pouring from her bows: her copper gleamed to every starboard roll on the white peaks of the sea along her bends in dull flashes as of a stormy sunset, with a frequent starlike sparkling about her from brass or glass. How swiftly she was passing us I could not have imagined until she was on our quarter, and then abreast of us—so close that I could distinguish the face of a man standing aft looking at us, of the fellow at the wheel, of a man at the break of the short poop singing out orders in a voice whose every syllable rang clearly to our hearing. A crowd of seamen were engaged in getting in the lower studding-sail, and this great sail went melting out against the hard mottled-blue of the sky as the clipper stormed past.

Jacob sprang on to a thwart, and in an ecstasy of

greeting that made a very windmill of his arms shrieked rather than roared out, 'How d'ye do, sir?—how d'ye do, sir? How are ye, sir? Glad to see ye, sir!'

The man that he addressed stared a moment, and hastily withdrew, and returned with a binocular glass which he levelled at us for a moment, then flourished his hand.

'What are you doing down here, Jacob?' he bawled.

'Going to Australey!' shouted Jacob.

'*Where?*' roared the other.

'To Sydney, New South Vales!' shouted Jacob.

The man, who was probably the captain, put his finger against his nose and wagged his head; but further speech was no longer possible.

'He don't believe us!' roared Jacob to his mate, and forthwith fell to making twenty extravagant gestures towards the ship in notification of his sincerity.

The wonderful squareness of the ship's canvas stole out as she gave us her stern, with the foam of her wake rushing from under the counter like to the dazzling

backwash of a huge paddle-wheel, and she seemed to fill the south-west heaven with her cloths, so high and broad did those complicated pinions, soaring to the trucks, look to us from the low seat of the bounding and sputtering lugger.

'Lord now!' cried Jacob, 'if she'd only give us the end of a tow-rope!'

'Yes,' said I, gazing with admiration at the beautiful figure of the ship rapidly forging ahead, and already diminishing into an exquisite daintiness and delicacy of shape and tint, 'you would not, in that case, have to talk of five and six months to Australia.'

At a quarter before twelve she was the merest toy ahead—just a glance of mother-of-pearl upon the horizon; but by this hour it was blowing a strong breeze of wind, and when Abraham came out of the forepeak he called to Jacob, and between them they eased up the fore-halliards and hooked the sheet to the second staken—in other words, to a sort of cringle or loop, of which there were four; then, having knotted the reef points, Abraham came aft to seek for the sun.

My humour was not a little pensive, for the sea that

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was now running was a verification of the boatman's words to me, and I could not keep my thoughts away from what must have happened to Helga and me had we not been mercifully taken off the raft. The lugger rose buoyantly to each flickering, seething head ; but, spite of my lifeboat experiences, I could not help watching with a certain anxiety the headlong rush of foam to her counter, nor could I feel the wild, ball-like toss the strong Atlantic surge would give to our eggshell of a boat, without misgiving as to the sort of weather she was likely to make should such another storm as had foundered the *Anine* come down upon the ocean. I was also vexed to the heart by the speed at which we were driving, and by the assurance —I was seafarer enough to understand—that in such a lump of a sea as was now running there would be a very small probability indeed of our being able to board, or even to get alongside of, a homeward-bounder, though twenty vessels, close-hauled for England, should travel past us in an hour. How far were we to be transported into this great ocean before the luck of the sea should put us in the way of returning home? These were considerations to greatly

subdue my spirits; and there was also the horror that memory brought when I glanced at the rushing headlong waters and thought of the raft.

I looked at Helga: her eyes were slowly sweeping the horizon, and on their coming to mine the tender blue of them seemed to darken to a gentle smile. Whatever her heart might be thinking of, assuredly no trace of the misgivings which were worrying me were discernible in her. The shadow of the grief that had been upon her face during the morning had returned with the passing away of the life the noble picture of the ship had kindled in her; but there was nothing in it to weaken in her lineaments their characteristic expression of firmness and resolution and spirit. Her tremorless lips lay parted to the sweep of the wind; her admirable little figure yielded to the bounding, often violent, jerking motions of the lugger with the grace of a consummate horsewoman, who is one with the brave swift creature she rides; her short yellow hair trembled under the dark velvet-like skin of her turban-shaped hat, as though each gust raised a showering of gold-dust about her neck and cheeks.

Yet I believe, had I been under sentence of death, I must have laughed outright at the spectacle of Abraham bobbing at the sun with an old-fashioned quadrant that might well have been in use for forty years. He stood up on straddled legs, with the aged instrument at his eye, mopping and mowing at the luminary in the south, and biting hard in his puzzlement and efforts at a piece of tobacco that stood out in his cheeks like a knob.

'He's a blazing long time in making height bells, hain't he, to-day!' said Jacob, addressing Abraham, and referring to the sun.

'He's all right,' answered Abraham, talking with his eye at the little telescope. 'You leave him to me, mate; keep you quiet, and I'll be telling you what o'clock it is presently.'

Helga turned her head to conceal her face, and, indeed, no countenance more comical than Abraham's could be imagined, what with the mastication of his jaws, which kept his ears and the muscles of his forehead moving, and what with the intensity of the screwed-up expression of his closed eye and the

slow wagging of his beard, like the tail of a pigeon newly alighted.

'Height bells!' he suddenly roared in a voice of triumph, at the same time whipping out a huge silver watch, at which he stared for some moments, holding the watch out at arm's-length, as though time was not to be very easily read. 'Blowed if it ben't one o'clock at Deal!' he cried. 'Only fancy being able to make or lose time as ye loike. Werry useful ashore, sir, that 'ud be, 'ticularly when you've got a bill a-falling doo.'

He then seated himself in the stern-sheets, and, producing a small book and a lead pencil from the locker, went to work to calculate his latitude. It was a very rough, ready, and primitive sort of reckoning. He eyed the paper with a knowing face, often scratching the hair over his ear and looking up at the sky with counting lips; then, being satisfied, he administered a nod all round, took out his chart, and, having made a mark upon it, exclaimed, while he returned it to the locker, 'There, that job's over till twelve o'clock to-morrow.' This said, he extracted a log-book that already looked as though it had been twice round

the world, together with a little penny bottle of ink and a pen, and, with the book open upon his knee, forthwith entered the latitude (as he made it) in the column ruled for that purpose; but I could not see that he made any attempt even at guessing at his longitude, though I noticed that he wrote down the speed of his little craft, which he obtained—and I dare say as correctly as if he had hove the log—by casting his eye over the side.

'How d'ye spell *Thermoppilly?*' said he, addressing us generally.

I told him.

'Just want to state here that we sighted her, that's all,' said he; 'this here space with "Remarks" wrote atop has got to be filled up, I suppose? At about wan o'clock this marning,' he exclaimed, speaking very slowly, and writing as he spoke, 'fell in with a raft—how's raft spelt, master?—two r's?' I spelt the word for him.—'Thank'ee! Fell in with a raft, and took off a lady and gent. There, that'll be the noose for twenty-four hours! Now let's go to dinner.'

This mid-day meal was composed of a piece of

corned beef, some ship's biscuit and cheese. I might have found a better appetite had there been less wind, and had the boat's head been pointed the other way. All the time now the lugger was swarming through it at the rate of steam. There was already a strong sea running too, the storminess of which we should have felt had we had it on the bow; but our arrowy speeding before it softened the fierceness of its sweeping hurls, and the wind for the same reason came with half the weight it really had, though we must have been reefed down to a mere strip of canvas had we been close-hauled. The sun shone with a dim and windy light out of the sky that was hard with a piebalding of cloud.

'What is the weather going to prove?' I asked Abraham.

He munched leisurely, with a slow look to windward, and answered, ''Tain't going to be worse nor ye see it.'

'Have you a barometer?' said I.

'No,' he answered; 'they're no good. In a boat arter this here pattern, what's the use of knowing what's agoing to come? It's only a-letting go a rope

an' you're under bare poles. Marcury's all very well in a big ship, where ye may be taken aback clean out o' the sky, and lose every spar down to the stumps of the lower masts.'

Though I constantly kept a look-out, sending my eyes roaming over either bow past the smooth and foaming curves of seas rushing ahead of us, I was very sensible, as I have said, that nothing was to be done in such hollow waters as we were now rushing through, though we should sight a score of homeward-bounders. Yet, spite of the wonderful life that strong northerly wind swept into the ocean, nothing whatever showed during the rest of the day, if I except a single tip of canvas that hovered for about a quarter of an hour some two or three leagues down in the east, like a little wreath of mountain mist. The incessant pouring of the wind past the ear, the shouting and whistling of it as it flashed spray-laden off each foaming peak in chase of us, grew inexpressibly sickening and wearying to me, coming as it did after our long exposure to the fierce weather of the earlier days. The thwarts or lockers brought our heads above the line of the gunwale,

and to remedy this I asked leave to drag a spare sail aft into the bottom of the boat, and there Helga and I sat, somewhat sheltered at least, and capable of conversing without being obliged to cry out.

CHAPTER III.

A 'LONGSHORE QUARREL.

WE passed the afternoon in this way. Jacob was forward, sleeping; Thomas's turn at the helm had come round again; and Abraham lay over the lee rail, within grasp of the foresheet, lost in contemplation of the rushing waters.

'Where and when is this experience of ours going to end?' said I to Helga as we sat chatting.

'How fast are we travelling?' she asked.

'Between eight and nine miles an hour,' I answered.

'This has been our speed during the greater part of the day,' she said. 'Your home grows more and more distant, Hugh; but you will return to it.'

'Oh, I fear for neither of us, Helga,' said I. 'Were it not for my mother, I should not be anxious. But

it will soon be a week since I left her, and, if she should hear that I was blown away out of the bay in the *Anine*, she will conclude that I perished in the vessel.'

'We must pray that God will support her and give her strength to await your return,' said she, speaking sadly, with her eyes bent down.

What more could she say? It was one of those passages in life in which one is made to feel that Providence is all in all, when the very instinct of human action in one is arrested, and when there comes upon the spirit a deep pause of waiting for God's will.

I looked at her earnestly as she sat by my side, and found myself dwelling with an almost lover-like pleasure upon the graces of her pale face, the delicacy of her lineaments, the refinement of prettiness that was heightened into something of dignity, maidenly as it was, by the fortitude of spirit her countenance expressed.

'Helga,' said I, 'what will you do when you return to Kolding?'

'I shall have to think,' she answered, with the

scarcely perceptible accent of a passing tremor in her voice.

'You have no relatives, your father told me.'

'No; none. A few friends, but no relatives.'

'But your father has a house at Kolding?'

'He rented a house, but it will be no home for me if I cannot afford to maintain it. But let my future be *my* trouble, Hugh,' said she gently, looking at me, and always pronouncing my name as a sister might a brother's.

'Oh' no!' said I. 'I am under a promise to your father—a promise that his death makes binding as a sacred oath upon me. Your future must be *my* business. If I carry you home in safety—I mean to my mother's home, Helga—I shall consider that I saved your life; and the life a man rescues it should be his privilege to render as easy and happy as it may lie in his power to make it. You have friends in my mother and me, even though you had not another in the wide world. So, Helga,' said I, taking her hand, 'however our strange rambles may end, you will promise me not to fret over what your future may hold when you get ashore.'

She looked at me with her eyes impassioned with gratitude. Her lips moved, but no word escaped her, and she averted her face to hide her tears.

Poor, brave, gentle little Helga! I spoke but out of my friendship and my sympathy for her, as who would not, situated as I was with her, my companion in distress, now an orphan, desolate, friendless, and poor? Yet I little knew then, heedless and inexperienced as I was in such matters, how pity in the heart of a young man will swiftly sweeten into deeper emotion when the object of it is young and fair and loving, and alone in the world.

The sun went down on a wild scene of troubled, running, foaming waters, darkling into green as they leapt and broke along the western sky, that was of a thunderous, smoky tincture, with a hot, dim, and stormy scarlet which flushed the clouds to the zenith. Yet there had been no increase in the wind during the afternoon. It had settled into a hard breeze, good for outward-bounders, but of a sort to send everything heading north that was not steam scattering east and west, with yards fore-and-aft and tacks complaining.

By this time I had grown very well used to the

motion of the lugger, had marked her easy flight from liquid peak into foam-laced valley, the onward buoyant bound again, the steady rush upon the head of the creaming sea, with foam to the line of the bulwark-rail, and the air for an instant snowlike with flying spume, and all the while the inside of the boat as dry as toast. This, I say, I had noticed with increasing admiration of the sea-going qualities of the hearty, bouncing, stalwart little fabric; and I was no longer sensible of the anxiety that had before possessed me when I thought of this undecked lugger struggling with a strong and lumpish sea—a mere yawn upon the water, saving her forecastle—so that a single billow tumbling over the rail must send her to the bottom.

'Small wonder,' said I to Helga, as we sat watching the sunset and marking the behaviour of the boat, 'that these Deal luggers should have the greatest reputation of any 'longshore craft around the English coasts, if they are all like this vessel! Her crew's adventure for Australia is no longer the astonishment I first found it. One might fearlessly sail round the world in such a craft.'

'Yes,' she answered softly in my ear—for surly Thomas sat hard by—'if the men had the qualities of the boat! But how are they to reach Australia without knowing their longitude? And if you were one of the party, would you trust Abraham's latitude? My father taught me navigation; and, though I am far from skilful at it, I know quite enough to feel sure that such a rough observation as Abraham took to day will, every twenty-four hours, make him three or four miles wrong, even in his latitude. Where, then, will the *Early Morn* blunder to?'

'Well, they are plainly a sensitive crew,' said I, 'and if we want their good-will, our business is to carry admiring faces, to find everything right, and say nothing.'

This chat was ended by Abraham joining us.

'Now, lady,' said he, 'when would ye like to tarn in? The forepeak's to be yourn for the night. Name your hour, and whosoever's in it'll have to clear out.'

'I am grateful indeed!' she exclaimed, putting her hand upon his great hairy paw in a pretty, caressing way.

'Abraham,' said I, 'I hope we shall meet again

after we have separated. I'll not forget your kindness to Miss Nielsen.'

'Say nothen about it, sir; say nothen about it!' he cried heartily. 'She's a sailor's daughter, for all he warn't an Englishman. Her father lies drownded, Mr. Tregarthen. If he was like his lass he'll have had a good heart, sir, and the sort of countenance one takes to at the first sight o't.' By the rusty light still living in the west I saw him turn his head to look forward and then aft; then lowering his voice into a deep sea growl he exclaimed: 'There's wan thing I should like to say: there's no call for either of ye to take any notice along of old Tommy. His feelings is all right; it's his vays as are wrong. Fact is,' and here he sent another look forward and then aft, 'Tommy's been a disapp'inted man in his marriages. His first vife took to drink, and was always a-combing of his hair with a three-legged stool, as Jack says. His second vife has the heart of a flint, spite of her prowiding him with ten children, fower by her first and six by Tommy. Of course it's got nothen to do with *me;* but there ain't the loike of Molly Budd—I mean Tommy's vife—in all Deal—

ay, ye may say in all Kent—for vickedness. Tommy owned to me wan day that though she'd lost children —ay, and though she'd lost good money tew—he'd never knowed her to shed a tear saving wonst. That was when she went out a-chairing. The master of the house had been in the habit of leaving the beer-key in the cask for th' ale to be sarved out by the hupper servant. Molly Budd was a-cleaning there one day, when down comes word for the key to be drawed out of the cask, and never no more to be left in it. This started Molly. She broke down and cried for a hour. Tommy had some hopes of her on that, but she dried up arterwards, and has never showed any sort of weakness since. But, of course, this is between you and me and the bed-post, Mr. Tregarthen.'

'Oh, certainly!' said I.

'And now about the lady's sleeping,' he continued.

I was anxious to see her snugly under cover; but she was in trouble to know how I was to get rest. I pointed to the open space under that overhanging ledge of deck which I have before described, and told her that I should find as good a bedroom there as I

needed. So after some little discussion it was arranged that she should take possession of the forepeak at nine o'clock, and, meanwhile, Abraham undertook to so bulkhead the opening under the deck with a spare mizenmast-yard and sail as to ensure as much shelter as I should require. I believe he observed Helga's solicitude about me, and proposed this merely to please her: and for the same motive I consented, though I was very unwilling to give the poor honest fellows any unnecessary trouble.

When the twilight died out, the night came down very black. A few lean, windy stars hovered wanly in the dark heights, and no light whatever fell from the sky; but the atmosphere low down upon the ocean was pale with the glare of the foam that was plentifully arching from the heads of the seas, and this vague illumination was in the boat to the degree that our figures were almost visible one to another. Indeed, a sort of wave of ghastly sheen would pass through the darkness amid which we sat each time the lugger buried herself in the foam raised by her shearing bounds, as though the dim reflection of a giant lantern had been thrown upon us from on high

by some vast shadowy hand searching for what might be upon the sea.

When nine o'clock arrived, Abraham went forward and routed Thomas out of the forepeak. The man muttered as he came aft to where we were, but I was resolved to have no ears for anything he might say at such a time. A sailor disturbed in his rest, grim, unshorn, scarcely awake, with the nipping night blast to exchange for his blanket, is proverbially the sulkiest and most growling of human wretches.

'I will see you to your chamber door, Helga,' said I, laughing. 'Abraham, can you spare the lady this lantern? She will not long need it.'

'She can have it as long as she likes,' he answered. 'Good-night to you, mum, and I hope you'll sleep well, I'm sure. Feared ye'll find the forepeak a bit noisy arter the silence of a big vessel's cabin.'

She made some answer, and I picked up the lantern that had been placed in the bottom of the boat for us to sit round, and, with my companion, went clambering over the thwarts to the hatch.

'It is a dark little hole for you to sleep in, Helga,' said I, holding the lantern over the hatch while I

peered down, 'but then—this time last night! Our chances we *now* know, but what were our hopes?'

'We may be even safer this time to-morrow night,' she answered, 'and rapidly making for England, let us pray!'

'Ay, indeed!' said I. 'Well, if you will get below, I will hand you down the light. Good-night, sleep well, and God bless you!'

I grasped and held her hand, then let it go, and she descended, carrying with her the little parcel she had brought with her from the barque.

I gave her the lantern, and returned to smoke a pipe in the bottom of the boat under the shelter of the stern sheets, before crawling to the sail that was to form my bed under the overhanging deck. Thomas, whose watch below it still was, was already resting under the ledge, Abraham steered, and Jacob sat with a pipe in his mouth to leeward. I noticed that one of these men always placed himself within instant reach of the foresheet. Abraham's talk altogether concerned Helga. He asked many questions about her, and got me to tell for the second time the story of her father's death upon the raft. He fre-

quently broke into homely expressions of sympathy, and when I paused, after telling him that the girl was an orphan and without means, he said :

'Beg pardon, Mr. Tregarthen ; but might I make so bold as to ask if so be as you're a married man ?'

'No,' said I ; 'I am single.'

'And is her heart her own, sir, d'ye know ?' said he. 'For as like as not there may be some young Danish gent as keeps company with her ashore.'

'I can't tell you that,' said I.

'If so be as her heart's her own,' said he, 'then I think even old Tommy could tell 'ee what's agoing to happen.'

'What do you mean ?' I asked.

'Why, of course,' said he, 'you're bound to marry her !'

As she was out of hearing, I could well afford to laugh.

'Well,' said I, 'the sea has been the cause of more wonderful things than that ! Any way, if I'm to marry her, you must put me in the way of doing so by sending us home as soon as you can.'

'Oy,' said he, 'that we'll do, and I don't reckon,

master, that you'd be dispoged to wait ontil we've returned from Australey, that Tommy and me and Jacob might have the satisfaction of drinking your healths and cutting a caper at your marriage.'

Jacob broke into a short roar that might or might not have denoted a laugh.

'I shall now turn in,' said I, 'for I am sleepy. But first I will see if Miss Nielsen is in want of anything, and bring the lantern aft to you.'

I went forward and looked down the hatch. By stooping, so as to bring my face on a level with the coaming, I could see the girl. She had placed the lantern in her bunk, and was kneeling in prayer. Her mother's picture was placed behind the lantern, where it lay visible to her, and she held the Bible she had brought from the barque; but that she could read it in that light I doubted. I supposed, therefore, that she grasped it for its sacredness as an object and a relic while she prayed, as a Roman Catholic might hold a crucifix.

I cannot express how much I was affected by this simple picture. Not for a million would I have wished her to guess that I watched her; and yet,

knowing that she was unconscious I was near, I felt I was no intruder. She had removed her hat: the lantern-light touched her pale hair, and I could see her lips moving as she prayed, with a frequent lifting of her soft eyes. But the beauty, the wonder, the impressiveness of this picture of maidenly devotion came to it from what surrounded it. The little fore-peak, dimly irradiated, showed like some fancy of an old painter upon the shadows and lights of whose masterly canvas lies the gloom of time. The strong wind was full of the noise of warring waters, and of its own wild crying; the foam of the surge roared about the lugger's cleaving bows, and to this was to be added the swift leaps, the level poising, the shooting, downward rushes of the little structure upon that wide, dark breast of wind-swept Atlantic.

She rose to her feet, and, stooping always, for her stature exceeded the height of the upper deck, she carefully replaced the Bible and picture in their cover. I withdrew, and, after waiting a minute or two, I approached again and called down to ask if all was well with her.

'Yes, Hugh,' she answered, coming under the hatch

with the lantern. 'I have made my bed. It was easily made. Will you take this light? The men may want it, and I shall not need to see down here.'

I grasped the lantern, and told her I would hold it in the hatch that it might light her while she got into her bunk.

'Good-night, Hugh,' said she, and presently called, in her clear, gentle voice, to let me know that she was lying down; on which I took the lantern aft, and, without more ado, crawled under the platform, or raft, as the Deal boatmen called it, crept into a sail, and in a few moments was sound asleep.

And now for three days, incredible as it will appear to those who are acquainted with that part of the sea which the lugger was then traversing, we sighted nothing—nothing, I mean, that provided us with the slenderest opportunity of speaking it. At very long intervals, it would be a little streak of canvas on the starboard or port sea-line, or some smudge of smoke from a steamer whose funnel was below the horizon; nothing more, and these so remote that the dim apparitions were as useless to us as though they had never been.

The wind held northerly, and on the Friday and Saturday it blew freshly, and in those hours Abraham reckoned that the *Early Morn* had done a good two hundred and twenty miles in every day, counting from noon to noon. I was for ever searching the sea, and Helga's gaze was as constant as mine ; until the eternal barrenness of the sinuous line of the ocean induced a kind of heart-sickness in me, and I would dismount from the thwart in a passion of vexation and disappointment, asking what had happened that no ship showed ? Into what part of the sea had we drifted ? Could this veritably be the confines of the Atlantic off the Biscayan coast and waters ? or had we been transported by some devil into an unnavigated tract of ocean on the other side of the world ?

'There's no want of ships,' Abraham said. 'The cuss of the matter is, we don't fall in with them. S'elp me, if I could only find one to give me a chance, I'd chivey her even if she showed the canvas of a *R'yal Jarge*.'

'If this goes on you'll have to carry us to Australia,' said I, guessing from my spirits as I spoke that I

was carrying an uncommonly long and dismal countenance.

'Hope not,' exclaimed sour Tommy, who was at the helm at this time of conversation. ''Taint that we objects to your company; but where's the grub for five souls a-coming from?'

'Don't say nothen about that,' said Abraham sharply. 'Both the gent and the lady brought their own grub along with them. *That* ye know, Tommy, and I allow that ye hain't found their ham bad eating either. They came,' he added, softening as he looked at his mate, 'like a poor man's twins, each with a loaf clapped by the angels on to its back.'

It was true enough that the provisions which had been removed from the raft would have sufficed Helga and me—well, I dare say, for a whole month, and perhaps six weeks, but for the three of the crew falling to the stock; and therefore I was not concerned by the reflection that we were eating into the poor fellows' slender larder. But, for all that, Thomas's remark touched me closely. I felt that if the three fellows, hearty and sailorly as were Abraham and Jacob—I say, I felt that if these three men were

not already weary of us they must soon become so, more particularly if it should happen that they met with no ship to supply them with what they might require; in which case they would have to make for the nearest port, a delay they would attribute to us, and that might set them grumbling in their gizzards, and render us both miserable until we got ashore.

However, I was no necromancer; I could not conjure up ships, and staring at the sea-line did not help us; but I very well recollect that that time of waiting and of expectation and of disappointment lay very heavily upon my spirits. There was something so strange in the desolation of this sea that I became melancholy and imaginative, and I remember that I foreboded a dark issue to my extraordinary adventure with Helga, insomuch that I took to heart a secret conviction I should never again see my mother —nay, that I should never again see my home.

Sunday morning came. I found a fine bright day when I crawled out of my sail under the overhanging ledge. The wind came out of the east in the night, and the *Early Morn*, with her sheet aft, was buzzing over the long swell that came flowing and brimming

to her side in lines of radiance in the flashing wake of the sun. Jacob was at the tiller, and, on my emerging, he instantly pointed ahead. I jumped on to a thwart, and perceived directly over the bows the leaning, alabaster-like shaft of a ship's canvas.

'How is she steering?' I cried.

'Slap for us,' he answered.

'Come!' I exclaimed with a sudden delight, 'we shall be giving you a farewell shake of the hand at last, I hope. You'll have to signal her,' I went on, looking at the lugger's masthead. 'What colours will you fly to make her know your wants?'

'Ye see that there pole?' exclaimed Thomas, in a grunting voice, pointing with a shovel-ended forefinger to the spare booms along the side of the boat. I nodded. 'Well,' said he, 'I suppose you know what the Jack is?'

'Certainly,' said I.

'Well,' he repeated, 'we seizes the Jack on to that there pole and hangs it over, and if that don't stop 'em it'll be 'cause they have a cargo of wheat aboard, the fumes of which'll have entered their eyes and struck 'em bloind.'

'That's so,' said Jacob, with a nod.

Just then Abraham came from under the deck, and in another moment Helga rose through the little hatch, and they both joined us.

'At last, Helga!' I cried, with a triumphant face, pointing.

She looked with her clear blue eyes for a little while in silence at the approaching vessel, as though to make sure of the direction she was heading in, then, clasping her hands, she exclaimed, drawing a breath like a sigh, 'Yes, at last. Hugh, your home is not so very far off now.'

'What's she loike?' said Abraham, bringing his knuckles out of his eyes and staring.

He went to the locker for a little old-fashioned 'longshore telescope, pointed it, and said, 'A bit of a barque. A furriner.' He peered again, 'A Hamburger,' cried he. 'Look, Tommy!'

The man put the glass to his eye and leaned against the rail, and his mouth lay with a sour curl under the little telescope as he stared through it.

'Yes, a whoite hull and a Hamburger,' said he 'and she's coming along tew. There'll be no time, I

allow, to bile the coffee-pot afore she's abreast,' he added, casting a hungry, morose eye towards the little cooking-stove.

'Ye can loight the foire, Tommy,' said Abraham, 'whoilst I signalize her,' saying which he took an English Jack out of that locker in which he kept the soap, towels, and, it seemed to me, pretty well all the crew's little belongings, and, having secured the flag to the end of the pole, he thrust it over the side and fell to motioning with it, continuing to do so until it was impossible to doubt that the people of the little barque had beheld the signal. He then let the pole with the flag flying upon it rest upon the rail, and took hold of the fore-halliards in readiness to let the sail drop.

I awaited the approach of the barque with breathless anxiety. I never questioned for a moment that she would take us aboard, and my thoughts flew ahead to the moment when Helga and I should be safely in her: when we should be looking round and finding a stout little ship under our feet, the lugger with her poor plucky Deal sailors standing away from us to the southward, and the horizon, past

which lay the coast of Old England, fair over the bows.

'Shove us close alongside, Jacob,' cried Abraham.

'Shall 'ee hook on, Abraham?' inquired Jacob.

'No call to it,' answered Abraham. 'We'll down lug and hail her. She'll back her tawps'l, and I'll put the parties aboard in the punt.'

'I have left my parcel in the forepeak,' said Helga, and was going for it.

'I'm nimbler than you can be now, Helga,' said I, smiling, and meaning that now she was in her girlish attire she had not my activity.

I jumped forward, and plunged down the hatch, took the parcel out of the bunk, and returned with it, all in such a wild, feverish hurry that one might have supposed the lugger was sinking, and that a moment of time might signify life or death to me. Abraham grinned, but made no remark. Thomas, on his knees before the stove, was sulkily blowing some shavings he had kindled. Jacob, with a wooden face at the tiller, was keeping the bows of the *Early Morn* on a line with the oncoming vessel.

The barque was under a full breast of canvas, and

was heeling prettily to the pleasant breeze of wind that was gushing brilliantly out of the eastern range of heaven, made glorious by the soaring sun. Her hull sat white as milk upon the dark-blue water, and her canvas rose in squares which resembled mother-of-pearl with the intermixture of shadow and flashing light upon them occasioned by her rolling, so that the cloths looked shot like watered silk or like the inside of an oyster-shell. But it was distance on top of the delight that her coming raised in me which gave her the enchantment I found in her, for, as she approached, her hull lost its snow-like glare and showed somewhat dingily with rusty stains from the scupper-holes. Her canvas, too, lost its symmetry, and exhibited an ill-set pile of cloths, most of the clews straining at a distance from the yard-arm sheave holes, and I also took notice of the disfigurement of a stump-foretop-gallant-mast.

'Dirty as a Portugee,' said Abraham; 'yet she's Jarman all the same.'

'I never took kindly to the Jarmans, myself,' said Jacob; 'they're a shoving people, but they arn't clean. Give me the Dutch. What's to beat their

cheeses? There's nothing made in England in the cheese line as aquils them Dutch cannon-balls, all pink outside and all cream hin.'

'Do you mean by a Hamburger a Hamburg ship?' asked Helga.

'Yes, lady, that's right,' answered Abraham.

'Then she's bound to Hamburg,' said the girl.

'Ask yourself the question,' answered Abraham —which is the Deal boatmen's way of saying yes.

She looked at me.

'It will be all the same,' said I, interpreting the glance; 'England is but over the way from Hamburg. Let us be homeward-bound, in any case. We have made southing enough, Helga.'

'Tommy!' sung out Abraham, 'give that there Jack another flourish, will ye?'

The man did so, with many strange contortions of his powerful frame, and then put down the pole and returned to the stove.

'There don't seem much life aboard of her,' said Jacob, eying the barque. 'I can only count wan head ower the fo'k'sle rail.'

'Down hellum, Jacob!' bawled Abraham, and as he

said the words he let go the fore-halliards, and down came the sail.

The lugger, with nothing showing but her little mizzen, lost way, and rose and fell quietly beam-on to the barque, whose head was directly at us, as though she must cut us down. When she was within a few cables' length of us she slightly shifted her helm and drew out. A man sprang on to her forecastle rail and yelled at us, brandishing his arms in a motioning way, as though in abuse of us for getting into the road. We strained our ears.

'What do 'ee say?' growled Abraham, looking at Helga.

'I do not understand him,' she answered.

'Barque ahoy!' roared Abraham.

The man on the forecastle-head fell silent, and watched us over his folded arms.

'Barque ahoy!' yelled Jacob.

The vessel was now showing her length to us. On Jacob shouting, a man came very quietly to the bulwarks near the mizzen rigging and, with sluggish motions, got upon the rail, where he stood, holding on by a back-stay, gazing at us lifelessly. The vessel

was so close that I could distinguish every feature of the fellow, and I see him now, as I write, with his fur cap and long coat and half-boots, and beard like oakum. The vessel was manifestly steered by a wheel deep behind the deck-house, and neither helm nor helmsman was visible—no living being, indeed, saving the motionless figure on the forecastle head and the equally lifeless figure holding on by the back-stay aft.

'Barque ahoy!' thundered Abraham. 'Back your tawps'l, will 'ee? Here's a lady and gent as we wants to put aboard ye; they're in distress. They've bin shipwreckt—they wants to git home. Heave to, for Gord's sake, if so be as you're *men!*'

Neither figure showed any indications of vitality.

'What! are they corpses?' cried Abraham.

'No—they're wuss—they're Jarmans!' answered Jacob, spitting fiercely.

On a sudden the fellow who was aft nodded at us, then kissed his hand, solemnly dismounted, and vanished, leaving no one in sight but the man forward, who a minute later disappeared also.

Abraham drew a deep breath, and looked at me.

His countenance suddenly changed. His face crimsoned with temper, and with a strange, ungainly, 'longshore plunge he sprang on top of the gunwale, supporting himself by a grip of the burton of the mizzenmast with one hand while he shook his other fist in a very ecstasy of passion at the retreating vessel.

'Call yourselves *men!*' he roared. 'I'll have the law along of ye! It'll be *me* as'll report ye! Don't think as I can't spell. H A N S A—*Hansa.* There it is, wrote big as life on your blooming starn! I'll remember ye! You sausage-eaters! — you scow-bankers!—you scaramouches!—you varmint! Call yourselves *sailors?* Only gi' me a chance of getting alongside!'

He continued to rage in this fashion, interlarding his language with words which sent Helga to the boat's side, and held her there with averted face; but, all the same, it was impossible to keep one's gravity. Vexed, maddened, indeed, as I was by the disappointment, it was as much as I could do to hold my countenance. The absurdity lay in this raving at a vessel that had passed swiftly out of

hearing, and upon whose deck not a living soul was visible.

Having exhausted all that he was able to think of in the way of abuse, Abraham dismounted, flung his cap into the bottom of the boat, and, drying his brow by passing the whole length of his arm along it, he exclaimed :

'There !—*now* I've given 'em something to think of !'

'Why, there was ne'er a soul to hear a word ye said,' exclaimed Thomas, who was still busy at the stove, without looking up.

'See here !' shouted Abraham, rounding upon him with the heat of a man glad of another excuse to quarrel. 'Dorn't *you* have nothen to say. No sarce from *you*, and so I tells ye ! I know all about ye. When did ye pay your rent last, eh ? Answer me that !' he sneered.

'Oh, that's it, is it ? that's the time o' day, eh ?' growled Thomas, looking slowly but fiercely round upon Abraham, and stolidly rising into a menacing posture, that was made wholly ridiculous by the clergyman's coat he wore. 'And what's my rent got

to do with you? 'T all events, if I *am* a bit behoind hand in my rent, moy farder was never locked up for six months.'

'Say for smuggling, Tommy, say for smuggling, or them parties as is a-listening 'll think the ould man did something wrong,' said Jacob.

Helga took me by the arm.

'Hugh, silence them!—they will come to blows.'

'No, no,' said I quickly, in a low voice. 'I know this type of men. There must be much more shouting than this before they double up their fists.'

Still, it was a stupid passage of temper, fit only to be quickly ended.

'Come, Abraham,' I cried, waiting till he had finished roaring out some further offensive question to Thomas, 'let us get sail on the boat and make an end of this. The trial of temper should be mine, not yours. Luck seems against the lady and me; and let me beg of you, as a good fellow and an English seaman, not to frighten Miss Nielsen.'

'What does Tommy want to sarce me for?' said he, still breathing defiance at his mate, out of his large nostrils and blood-red visage.

'What's my rent got to do with you?' shouted the other.

'And what's moy father got to do with you?' bawled Abraham.

'I say, Jacob!' I cried, 'for God's sake let's tail on to the halliards and start afresh. There's no good in all this!'

'Come along, Abey! come along, Tommy!' bawled Jacob. 'Droy up, mates! More'n enough's been said;' and with that he laid hold of the halliards, and, without another word, Abraham and Thomas seized the rope, and the sail was mastheaded.

Abraham went to the tiller, the other two went to work to get breakfast, and now, in a silence that was not a little refreshing after the coarse hoarse clamour of the quarrel, the lugger buzzed onwards afresh.

'We shall be more fortunate next time,' said Helga, looking wistfully at me; and well I knew there was no want of worry in my face; for now there was peace in the boat the infamous cold-blooded indifference of the rogues we had just passed made me feel half mad.

'We might have been starving,' said I; 'we might

have been perishing for the want of a drink of water, and still the ruffians would have treated us so.'

'It is but waiting a little longer, Hugh,' said Helga softly.

'Ay, but how much longer, Helga?' said I. 'Must we wait for Cape Town, or perhaps Australia?'

'Mr. Tregarthen—don't let imagination run away with ye!' exclaimed Abraham, in a voice of composure that was not a little astonishing after his recent outbreak; though, having a tolerably intimate knowledge of the 'longshore character, and being very well aware that the words these fellows hurl at one another mean little, and commonly end in nothing—unless the men are drunk—I was not very greatly surprised by the change in our friend. 'There's nothen' that upsets the moind quicker than imagination. I'll gi' ye a yarn. There's an old chap, of the name of Billy Buttress, as crawls about our beach. A little grandson o' his took the glasses out o' his spectacles by way o' amusing hisself. When old Billy puts 'em on to read with, he sings out: "God bless me, Oi'm gone bloind!" and trembling, and all of a clam, as the saying is, he outs with his

handkerchief to woipe the glasses, thinking it might be dirt as hindered him from seeing, and then he cries out, "Lor' now, if I an't lost my feeling!" He wasn't to be comforted till they sent for a pint o' ale and showed him that his glasses had been took out. That's imagination, master. Don't you be afeered, We'll be setting ye aboard a homeward-bounder afore long.'

By the time the fellows had got breakfast, the hull of the barque astern was out of sight; nothing showed of her but a little hovering glance of canvas, and the sea-line swept from her to ahead of us in a bare unbroken girdle.

CHAPTER IV.

A SAILOR'S DEATH.

THE day slipped away ; there were no more disputes ; Thomas went to lie down, and, when Jacob took the tiller, Abraham took a little book out of his locker and read it, with his lips moving, holding it out at arms' length, as though it were a daguerreotype that was only discernible in a certain light. I asked him the name of the book.

'The Boible,' said he. 'It's the Sabbath, master, and I always read a chapter of this here book on Sundays.'

Helga started.

'It is Sunday, indeed!' she exclaimed. 'I had forgotten it. How swiftly do the days come round! It was a week last night since we left the bay, and this day week my father was alive—my dear father was alive!'

She opened the parcel and took out the little Bible that had belonged to her mother. I had supposed it was in Danish, but on my taking it from her I found it an English Bible. But then I recollected that her mother had been English. I asked her to read aloud to me, and she did so, pronouncing every word in a clear, sweet voice. I recollect it was a chapter out of the new Testament, and while she read Abraham put down his book to listen, and Jacob leant forward from the tiller with a straining ear.

In this fashion the time passed.

I went to my miserable bed of spare sail under the overhanging deck shortly after nine o'clock that night. This unsheltered opening was truly a cold, windy, miserable bedroom for a man who could not in any way claim that he was used to hardship. Indeed, the wretchedness of the accommodation was as much a cause as any other condition of our situation of my wild, headlong impatience to get away from the lugger and sail for home in a ship that would find me shelter and a bed and room to move in, and those bare conveniences of life which were lacking aboard the *Early Morn.*

Well, as I have said, shortly after nine o'clock on that Sunday I bade good-night to Abraham, who was steering the vessel, and entered my sleeping abode, where Jacob was lying rolled up in a blanket, snoring heavily. It was then a dark night, but the wind was scant, and the water smooth, and but little motion of swell in it. I had looked for a star, but there was none to be seen, and then I had looked for a ship's light, but the dusk stood like a wall of blackness within a musket-shot of the lugger's sides—for that was about as far as one could see the dim crawling of the foam to windward and its receding glimmer on the other hand—and there was not the faintest point of green or red or white anywhere visible.

I lay awake for some time: sleep could make but little headway against the battery of snorts and gasps which the Deal boatman, lying close beside me, opposed to it. My mind also was uncommonly active with worry and anxiety. I was dwelling constantly upon my mother, recalling her as I had last seen her by the glow of the fire in her little parlour when I gave her that last kiss and ran out of the house. It is eight days ago, thought I; and it seemed incredible

that the time should have thus fled. Then I thought of Helga, the anguish of heart the poor girl had suffered, her heroic acceptance of her fate, her simple piety, her friendlessness and her future.

In this way was my mind occupied when I fell asleep, and I afterwards knew that I must have lain for about an hour wrapped in the heavy slumber that comes to a weary man at sea.

I was awakened by a sound of the crashing and splintering of wood. This was instantly succeeded by a loud and fearful cry, accompanied by the noise of a heavy splash, immediately followed by hoarse shouts. One of the voices I believed was Abraham's, but the blending of the distressed and terrified bawlings rendered them confounding, and scarcely distinguishable. It was pitch dark where I lay. I got on to my knees to crawl out ; but some spare sail that Abraham had contrived as a shelter for me had slipped from its position, and obstructed me, and I lay upon my knees wrestling for a few minutes before I could free myself. In this time my belief was that the lugger had been in collision with some black shadow of a ship invisible to the helmsman in the darkness, and

that she might be now, even while I kneeled wrestling with the sail, going down under us, with Helga, perhaps, still in the forepeak. This caused me to struggle furiously, and presently I got clear of the blinding and hugging folds of the canvas; but I was almost spent with fear and exertion.

Someone continued to shout, and by the character of his cries I gathered that he was hailing a vessel close to. It was blowing a sharp squall of wind, and raining furiously. The darkness was that of the inside of a mine, and all that I could see was the figure of a boatman leaning over the side and holding the lantern (that was kept burning all night) on a level with the gunwale while he shouted, and then listened, and then shouted again.

'What has happened?' I cried.

The voice of Jacob, though I could not see him, answered, in a tone I shall never forget for the misery and consternation of it:

'The foremast's carried away, and knocked poor old Tommy overboard. He's drownded! he's drownded! He don't make no answer. His painted clothes and boots have took him down as if he was a dipsy lead.'

'Can he swim?' I cried.

'No, sir, no!'

I sprang to where Abraham overhung the rail.

'Will he be lying fouled by the gear over the side, do you think?' I cried to the man.

'No, sir,' answered Abraham: 'he drifted clear. He sung out once as he went astern. What a thing to happen! Can't launch the punt with the lugger a wreck,' he added, talking as though he thought aloud in his misery. 'We'd stand to lose the lugger if we launch the punt.'

'Listen!' shouted Jacob, and he sent his voice in a bull-like roar into the blackness astern: 'Tom-mee!'

There was nothing to be heard but the shrilling of the sharp-edged squall rushing athwart the boat, that now lay beam on to it, and the slashing noise of the deluge of rain, horizontally streaming, and the grinding of the wrecked gear alongside, with frequent sharp slaps of the rising sea against the bends of the lugger, and the fierce snarling of melting heads of waters suddenly and savagely vexed and flashed into spray while curling.

'What is it?' cried the voice of Helga in my ear.

'Ah, thank Heaven, you are safe!' I cried, feeling for her hand and grasping it. 'A dreadful thing has happened. The lugger has been dismasted, and the fall of the spar has knocked the man Thomas overboard.'

'He may be swimming!' she exclaimed.

'No! no! no!' growled Abraham, in a voice hoarse with grief. 'He's gone—he's gone! we shall never see him again.' Then his note suddenly changed. 'Jacob, the raffle alongside must be got in at wonst: let's bear a hand afore the sea jumps aboard. Lady, will you hold the loight? Mr. Tregarthen, we shall want you to help us.'

'Willingly!' I cried.

I remembered at that moment that my oilskin coat lay in the side of the boat close to where I stood. I stooped and felt it, and in a moment I had whipped it over Helga's shoulders, for she was now holding the lantern, and I had her clear in my sight. It would be a godsend to her, I knew, in the wet that was now sluicing past us, and that must speedily have soaked her to the skin, clad as she was.

For the next few minutes all was bustle and hoarse shouts. I see little Helga, now, hanging over the

side and swinging the lantern, that its light might touch the wreckage; I see the crystals of rain flashing past the lantern, and blinding the glass of it with wet; I feel again the rush of the fierce squall upon my face, making breathing a labour, while I grab hold of the canvas, and help the men to drag the great, sodden heavy sail into the boat. We worked desperately, and, as I have said, in a few minutes we had got the whole of the sail out of the water; but the mast was too heavy to handle in the blackness, and it was left to float clear of us by the halliards till daylight should come.

We were wet through, and chilled to the heart besides—I speak of myself, at least—not more by the sharp bite of that black, wet squall, than by the horror occasioned by the sudden loss of a man, by the thought of one as familiar to the sight as hourly association could make him, who was just now living and talking, lying cold and still, sinking fathoms deep into the heart of that dark measureless profound on whose surface the lugger—in all probability the tiniest ark at that moment afloat in the oceans she was attempting to traverse—was tumbling.

'Haul aft the mizen sheet, Jacob!' said Abraham in a voice hoarse indeed, but marked with depression also. 'Ye can secure the tiller too. She must loie as she is till we can see what we're about.'

The man went aft with the lantern. He speedily executed Abraham's orders; but by the aid of the dim lantern light I could see him standing motionless in the stern-sheets, as though hearkening and straining his gaze.

'He's gone, Abraham!' he cried suddenly in a rough voice that trembled with emotion, 'There will be never no more to hear of Tommy Budd. Ay, gone dead—drownded for ever!' I heard him mutter, as he picked up the lantern and came with heavy booted legs clambering over the thwarts to us.

'As God's my loife, how sudden it were!' cried Abraham, making his hands meet in a sharp report in the passion of grief with which he clapped them.

It was still raining hard, and the atmosphere was of a midnight blackness; but all the hardness of the squall was gone out of the wind, and it was now blowing a steady breeze, such as we should have been able

to expose our whole lugsail to could we have hoisted it. Jacob held the lantern to the mast, or rather to the fragment that remained of it. You must know that a Deal lugger's mast is stepped in what is termed a 'tabernacle' — that is to say, a sort of box, which enables the crew to lower or set up their masts at will. This 'tabernacle' with us stood a little less than two feet above the forepeak deck, and the mast had been broken at some ten feet above it. It showed in very ugly, fang-like points.

'Two rotten masts for such a voyage as this!' cried Jacob, with a savage note in his voice. ''Tis old Thompson's work. Would he was in Tommy's place! S'elp me! I'd give half the airnings of this voyage for the chance to drown him!' By which I might gather that he referred to the boat-builder who had supplied the masts.

'No use in standing in this drizzle, men,' said I. 'It's a bad job, but there's nothing to be done for the present, Abraham. There's shelter to be got under this deck, here. Have you another lantern?'

'What for?' asked Abraham, in the voice of a man utterly broken down.

'Why, to show,' said I, 'lest we should be run into. Here we are stationary, you know, and who's to see us as we lie?'

'And a blooming good job if we *was* run into!' returned Abraham. 'Blarst me if I couldn't chuck moyself overboard!'

'Nonsense!' cried I, alarmed by his tone rather than by his words. 'Let us get under shelter! Here, Jacob, give me the light! Now, Helga, crawl in first and show us the road. Abraham, in with you! Jacob, take this lantern, will you, and get one of those jars of spirits you took off the raft, and a mug and some cold water! Abraham will be the better for a dram, and so will you.'

The jar was procured, and each man took a hearty drink. I, too, found comfort in a dram, but I could not induce Helga to put the mug to her lips. The four of us crouched under the overhanging deck—there was no height, and, indeed, no breadth for an easier posture. We set the lantern in our midst—I had no more to say about showing the light—and in this dim irradiation we gazed at one another. Abraham's countenance looked of a ghostly white. Jacob,

with mournful gestures, filled a pipe, and his melancholy visage resembled some grotesque face beheld in a dream as he opened the lantern and thrust his nose, with a large raindrop hanging at the end of it, close to the flame to light the tobacco.

'To think that I should have had a row with him only this marning!' growled Abraham, hugging his knees. 'What roight had I to go and sarce him about his rent? Will any man tell me,' said he, slowly looking round, 'that poor old Tommy's heart warn't in the roight place? Oi hope not, Oi hope not—Oi couldn't abear to hear it said. He was a man as had had to struggle hard for his bread, like others along of us, and disappointment and want and marriage had tarned his blood hacid. Oi've known him to pass three days without biting a crust. The wery bed on which he lay was took from him. Yet he bore up, and without th' help o' drink, and I says that to the pore chap's credit.'

He paused.

'At bottom,' exclaimed Jacob, sucking hard at his inch of sooty clay, 'Tommy was a *man*. He once saved my loife. You remember, Abey, that job I had

along with him when we was a-towing down on the quarter of a big light Spaniard ?'

'I remember, I remember,' grunted Abraham.

'The boat sheered,' continued Jacob, addressing me, 'and got agin the steamer's screw, and the stroke of the blade cut the boat roight in halves. They chucked us a loife-buoy. Poor old Tommy got hold of it and heads for me, who were drowning some fadoms off. He clutched me by the hair just in toime, and held me till we was picked up. And now *he's* gone dead and we shall never see him no more.'

'Tommy Budd,' exclaimed Abraham, 'was that sort of man that he never took a pint himself without asking a chap to have a glass tew, if so be as he had the valley of it on him. There was no smarter man fore and aft the beach in steering a galley-punt. There was scarce a regatta but what he was fust.'

'He was a upright man,' said Jacob, observing that Abraham had paused; 'and never more upright than when he warn't sober, which proves how true his instincts was. When his darter got married to young darkey Dick, as Tommy didn't think a sootable match,

he walks into the room of the public-house where the company was dancing and enjoying themselves, kicked the whole blooming party out into the road, then sits down, and calls for a glass himself. Of course he'd had a drop too much. But the drink only improved his nat'ral disloike of the wedding. Pore Tommy! Abey, pass along that jar!'

In this fashion these plain, simple-hearted souls of boatmen continued for some time, with now and again an interlude in the direction of the spirit-jar, to bewail the loss of their unhappy shipmate. Our situation, however, was of a sort that would not suffer the shock caused by the man Thomas's death to be very lasting. Here we were in what was little better than an open boat of eighteen tons, lying dismasted, and entirely helpless, amid the solitude of a black midnight in the Atlantic Ocean, with nothing but an already wounded mast to depend upon when daybreak should come to enable us to set it up, and the lugger's slender crew less by one able hand!

It was still a thick and drizzling night, with a plentiful sobbing of water alongside; but the *Early Morn*, under her little mizzen and with her bows

almost head to sea, rose and fell quietly. By this time the men had pretty well exhausted their lamentations over Thomas. I therefore ventured to change the subject.

'Now there are but two of you,' said I, 'I suppose you'll up with your mast to-morrow morning and make for home?'

'No fear!' answered Abraham, speaking with briskness out of the drams he had swallowed. 'We're agoing to Australey, and if so be as another of us ain't taken we'll *git* there.'

'But surely you'll not continue this voyage with the outfit you now have?' said I.

'Well,' said he, 'we shall have to "fish" the mast that's sprung and try and make it sarve till we falls in with a wessel as'll give us a sound spar to take the mast's place. Anyhow, we shall keep all on.'

'Ay, we shall keep all on,' said Jacob: 'no use coming all this way to tarn back again. Why, Gor' bless me! what 'ud be said of us?'

'But, surely,' said Helga, 'two of you 'll not be able to manage this big boat?'

'Lord love 'ee, yes, lady,' cried Abraham. 'Mind

ye, if we was out a-pleasuring I should want to get home; but there's money to take up at the end of this ramble, and Jacob and me means to airn it.'

Thus speaking, he crawled out to have a look at the weather, and was a moment later followed by Jacob, and presently I could hear them both earnestly consulting on what was to be done when the morning came, and how they were to manage afterwards, now that Thomas was gone.

The light of the lantern lay upon Helga's face as she sat close beside me on the spare sail that had formed my rough couch.

'What further experiences are we to pass through?' said I.

'Little you guessed what was before you when you came off to us in the lifeboat, Hugh!' said she, gazing gently at me with eyes which seemed black in the dull light.

'These two boatmen,' said I, 'are very good fellows, but there is a pig-headedness about them that does not improve our distress. Their resolution to proceed might appear as a wonderful stroke of courage to a landsman's mind, but to a sailor it could signify

nothing more than the rankest foolhardiness. A plague upon their heroism! A little timidity would mean common-sense, and then to-morrow morning we should be heading for home. But I fear you are wet through, Helga.'

'No, your oilskin has kept me dry,' she answered.

'No need for you to stay here,' said I. 'Why not return to the forepeak and finish out the night?'

'I would rather remain with you.'

'Ay, Helga, but you must spare no pains to fortify yourself with rest and food. Who knows what the future may be holding for us—how heavily the pair of us may yet be tried? These experiences, so far, may prove but a few links of a chain whose end is still a long way off.'

She put her hand on the back of mine, and tenderly stroked it.

'Hugh,' said she, 'remember our plain friend Abraham's advice: do not let imagination run away with you. The spirit that brought you to the side of the *Anine* in the black and dreadful night is still your own. Cheer up! All will be well with you yet. What makes me say this? I cannot tell, if it be not

the conviction that God will not leave unwatched one whose trials have been brought about by an act of noble courage and of beautiful resolution.'

She continued to caress my hand as she spoke—an unconscious gesture in her, as I perceived—maybe it was a habit of her affectionate heart, and I could figure her thus caressing her father's hand, or the hand of a dear friend. Her soft eyes were upon my face as she addressed me, and there was light enough to enable me to distinguish a little encouraging smile full of sweetness upon her lips.

If ever strength is to be given to a man in a time of bitter anxiety and peril, the inspiration of spirit must surely come from such a little woman as this. I felt the influence of her manner and of her presence.

'You have a fine spirit, Helga,' said I. 'Your name should be Nelson instead of Nielsen. The blood of nothing short of the greatest of English captains should be in your veins.'

She laughed softly and answered, 'No, no! I am a Dane first. Let me be an English girl next.'

Well, I again endeavoured to persuade her to with-

draw to her bunk, but she begged hard to remain with me, and so for a long while we continued to sit and talk. Her speaking of herself as a Dane first and an Englishwoman afterwards, started her on the subject of her home and childhood, and once again she talked of Kolding and of her mother, and of the time she had spent in London, and of an English school she had been put to. I could overhear the rumbling of the two fellows' voices outside. By-and-by I crawled out and found the rain had ceased; but it was pitch dark, and blowing a cold wind. Jacob had lighted the fire in the stove. His figure showed in the ruddy glare as he squatted toasting his hands I returned to Helga, and presently Abraham arrived to ask us if we would have a drop of hot coffee. This was a real luxury at such a time. We gratefully took a mugful, and with the help of it made a midnight meal off a biscuit and a little tinned meat.

How we scraped through those long, dark, wet hours I will not pretend to describe. Towards the morning Helga fell asleep by my side on the sail upon which we were crouching, but for my part I could get no rest, nor, indeed, did I strive or wish

for rest. One thing coming on top of another had rendered me unusually nervous, and all the while I was thinking that our next experience might be the feeling some great shearing stem of a sailing-ship or steamer striking into the lugger and drowning the lot of us before we could well realize what had happened. I was only easy in my mind when the boatmen carried the lantern out from under the overhanging deck for some purpose or other.

It came at last, however, to my being able no longer to conceal my apprehensions, and then, after some talk and a bit of hearty 'pooh-poohing' on the part of Abraham, he consented to secure the light to the stump of the mast.

This might have been at about half-past three o'clock in the morning, when the night was blacker than it had been at any previous hour: and then a very strange thing followed. I had returned to my shelter, and was sitting lost in thought, for Helga was now sleeping. The two boatmen were in the open, but what they were about I could not tell you. I was sunk deep in gloomy thought, as I have said, when on a sudden I heard a sound of loud bawling. I went

out as quickly as my knees would carry me, and the first thing I saw was the green light of a ship glimmering faintly as a glowworm out in the darkness abeam. I knew her to be a sailing-ship, for she showed no masthead-light, but there was not the dimmest outline to be seen of her. Her canvas threw no pallor upon the midnight wall of atmosphere. But for that fluctuating green light, showing so illusively that one needed to look a little on one side of it to catch it, the ocean would have been as bare as the heavens, so far as the sight went. One after the other the two boatmen continued to shout, 'Ship ahoy!' in hearty, roaring voices, which they sent flying through the arches of their hands; but the light went sliding on, and in a few minutes the screen in which it was hung eclipsed it, and it was all blackness again, look where one would.

There was nothing to be said about this to the men. I crept back to Helga, who had been awakened by the hoarse shouts.

'Some sailing-vessel has passed us,' said I, in answer to her inquiry, 'as we may know by the green light; but how near or far I cannot tell. Yet

it is more likely than not, Helga, that but for my begging Abraham to keep a light showing, that same ship might have run us down.'

We conversed awhile about the vessel and our chances, and then her voice grew languid again with drowsiness, and she fell asleep.

Somewhile before dawn the rain ceased, the sky brightened, and here and there a star showed. I had been out overhanging the gunwale with Abraham, and listening to him as he talked about his mate Thomas, and how the children were to manage now that the poor fellow was taken, when the gray of the dawn rose floating into the sky off the black rim of the sea.

In a short time the daylight was abroad, with the pink of the coming sun swiftly growing in glory among the clouds in the east. Jacob sat sleeping in the bottom of the boat, squatting Lascar fashion—a huddle of coat and angular knees and bowed head. I got upon a thwart and sent a long thirsty look round.

'By Heaven, Abraham!' I cried, '*nothing* in sight, as I live to say it! What, in the name of hope, has come to the sea?'

'We're agoing to have a fine day, I'm thankful to say,' he answered, turning up his eyes. 'But, Lord! what a wreck the lugger looks!'

The poor fellow was as haggard as though he had risen from a sick-bed, and this sudden gauntness or elongation of countenance was not a little heightened by a small powdering of the crystals of salt lying white under the hollow of each eye, where the brine that had been swept up by the squall had lodged and dried.

'Hi, Jacob!' he cried; 'rouse up, matey! Day's broke, and there's work to be done.'

Jacob staggered to his feet with many contortions and grimaces.

'Chock-a-block with rheumatics,' he growled; 'that's how the sea sarves a man. They said it 'ud get warmer the furder we drawed down this way; but if this be what they calls *warm*, give me the scissors and thumbscrews of a Janivary gale in the Jarman Ocean.' He gazed slowly around him, and fixed his eyes on the stump of the mast. 'Afore we begin, Abraham,' said he, 'I must have a drop of hot corffee.'

'Right,' answered the other; 'a quarter of an hour isn't going to make any difference.'

A fire was kindled, a kettle of water boiled, and, Helga now arriving, the four of us sat, every one with a mug of the comforting, steaming beverage in hand, while the two boatmen settled the procedure of strengthening the wounded spar by 'fishing it,' as it is termed, and of making sail afresh.

CHAPTER V.

THE END OF THE 'EARLY MORN.'

THE first business of the men was to get the broken mast out of the water. Helga helped, and worked with as much dexterity as though she had been bred to the calling of the Deal waterman. The mast in breaking had been shortened by ten feet, and was therefore hardly as useful a spar to step as the bowsprit. It was laid along the thwarts in the side, and we went to work to strengthen the mast that had been sprung in the Channel by laying pieces of wood over the fractured part, and securely binding them by turn upon turn of rope. This, at sea, they call 'fishing a spar.' Jacob shook his head as he looked at the mast when we had made an end of the repairs, but said nothing. When the mast was stepped, we hoisted the sail with a reef in it to ease the strain.

Abraham went to the tiller, the boat's head was put to a south-west course, and once again the little fabric was pushing through it, rolling in a long-drawn way upon a sudden swell that had risen while we worked, with a frequent little vicious shake of white waters off her bow, as though the combing of the small seas irritated her.

The wind was about east, of a November coldness, and it blew somewhat lightly till a little before ten o'clock in the morning, when it came along freshening in a gust which heeled the boat sharply, and brought a wild, anxious look into Abraham's eyes as he gazed at the mast. The horizon slightly thickened to some film of mist which overlay the windward junction of heaven and water, and the sky then took a windy face, with dim breaks of blue betwixt long streaks of hard vapour, under which there nimbly sailed, here and there, a wreath of light-yellow scud. The sea rapidly became sloppy—an uncomfortable tumble of billows occasioned by the lateral run of the swell—and the boat's gait grew so staggering, such a sense of internal dislocation was induced by her brisk, jerky wobbling—now to windward, now to leeward, now by

the stern, now by the head, then all the motions happening together, as it were, followed by a sickly, leaning slide down some slope of rounded water—that for the first time in my life I felt positively sea-sick, and was not a little thankful for the relief I obtained from a nip of poor Captain Nielsen's brandy out of one of the few jars which had been taken from the raft, and which still remained full.

Some while before noon it was blowing a fresh breeze, with a somewhat steadier sea; but the rolling and plunging of the lugger continued sharp and exceedingly uncomfortable. To still further help the mast — Abraham having gone into the fore-peak to get a little sleep — Helga and I, at the request of Jacob, who was steering, tied a second reef in the sail: though, had the spar been sound, the lugger would have easily borne the whole of her canvas.

'If that mast goes, what is to be done?' said I to Jacob.

'Whoy,' he answered, 'we shall have to make shift with the remains of the mast that went overboard last night.'

'But what sail will you be able to hoist on that shortened height?'

'Enough to keep us slowly blowing along,' he answered, 'till we falls in with a wessel as will help us to the sort o' spar as 'll sarve.'

'Considering the barrenness of the sea we have been sailing through,' said I, 'the look-out seems a poor one, if we're to depend upon passing assistance.'

'Mr. Tregarthen,' said he, fixing his eyes upon my face, 'I'm an older man nor you, and therefore I takes the liberty of telling ye this: that neither ashore nor at sea do things fall out in the fashion as is hanticipated. That's what the Hi-talian organ-grinder discovered. He conceived that if he could get hold of a big monkey he'd do a good trade; so he buys the biggest he could meet with—a chap pretty nigh as big as himself. What happened? When them parties was met with a week arterwards, it was the monkey that was a-turning the handle, while the horgan-grinder was doing the dancing.'

'The public wouldn't know the difference,' said Helga.

'True for you, lady,' answered Jacob, with an approving nod and a smile of admiration. 'But Mr. Tregarthen here'll find out that I'm speaking the Lard's truth when I says that human hanticipation always works out contrariwise.'

'I heartily hope it may do so in our case!' I exclaimed, vexed by the irrationality, as it seemed to me, of this homely boatman's philosophic views.

'About toime for Abraham to take soights, ain't it?' said he.

I went to the hatch and called to Abraham, who in a few minutes arrived, and, with sleepy eyes, fell to groping after the sun with his old quadrant. While he was thus occupied, Helga touched me lightly on the shoulder and pointed astern. I peered an instant, and then said:

'I see it! A sail!—at the wrong end of the sea again, of course! Another *Thermopylæ*, maybe, to thunder past us with no further recognition of our wants than a wagging head over the rail, with a finger at its nose.'

'It's height bells!' cried Abraham; and he sat down to his rough calculations.

Jacob looked soberly over his shoulder at the distant tiny space of white canvas.

'If there's business to be done with her,' said he, 'we must steer to keep her head right at our starn. What course'll she be taking?'

'She appears to be coming directly at us,' answered Helga.

'Why not lower your sail, heave the lugger to, and fly a distress signal?' said I.

I had scarcely uttered the words when the boat violently jumped a sea; a crash followed, and the next instant the sail, with half of the fished mast, was overboard, with the lugger rapidly swinging, head to sea, to the drag of the wreckage.

I was not a little startled by the sudden cracking of the mast, that was like the report of a gun, and the splash of the sail overboard, and the rapid slewing of the boat.

Helga quietly said in my ear, 'Nothing better could have happened. We are now indeed a wreck for that ship astern to sight, and she is sure to speak us.'

Abraham flung down his logbook with a sudden roaring out of I know not what 'longshore profanities,

and Jacob, letting go the helm, went scrambling forwards over the thwarts, heaping sea-blessings, as he sprawled, upon the eyes and limbs of the boat-builder who had supplied the lugger with spars. The three of us went to work, and Helga helped us as best she could, to get the sail in; but the sea that was now running was large compared to what it had been during the night, and the task was extraordinarily laborious and distressful. Indeed, how long it took us to drag that great lug-sail full of water over the rail was to be told by the ship astern, for when I had leisure to look for her I found her risen to her hull, and coming along, as it seemed to me, dead for us, heeling sharply away from the fresh wind, but rolling heavily too on the swell, and pitching with the regularity of a swing in motion.

Helga and I threw ourselves upon a thwart, to take breath. The boatmen stood looking at the approaching vessel.

'She'll not miss seeing us, any way,' said Abraham.

'I'm for letting the lugger loie as she is,' exclaimed Jacob: 'they'll see the mess we're in, and back their taws'l.'

'You will signal to her, I hope?' said I.

'Ay,' answered Abraham; 'we'll gi' 'em a flourish of the Jack presently, though there'll be little need, for if our condition ain't going to stop 'em there's nothen in a colour to do it.'

'Abraham,' said I, 'you and Jacob will not, I am sure, think us ungrateful if I say that I have made up my mind—and I am sure Miss Nielsen will agree—that I have made up my mind, Abraham, to leave your lugger for that ship, outward-bound as I can see she is, if she will receive us.'

'Well, sir,' answered Abraham mildly, 'you and the lady are your own masters, and, of course, you'll do as you please.'

'It is no longer right,' I continued, 'that we should go on in this fashion, eating you out of your little floating house and home; nor is it reasonable that we should keep you deprived of the comfort of your fore-peak. We owe you our lives, and, God knows, we are grateful! But our gratitude must not take the form of compelling you to go on maintaining us.'

Abraham took a slow look at the ship.

'Well, sir,' said he, 'down to this hour the odds

have been so heavy agin your exchanging this craft for a homeward-bounder that I really haven't the heart to recommend ye to wait a little longer. It's but an oncomfortable life for the likes of you and the lady—she having to loie in a little bit of a coal-black room, forrads, as may be all very good for us men, but werry bad and hard for her; and you having to tarn in under that there opening, into which there's no vartue in sail-cloth to keep the draughts from blowing. I dorn't doubt ye'll be happier aboard a craft where you'll have room to stretch your legs in, a proper table to sit down to for your meals, and a cabin where you'll loie snug. 'Sides, tain't, after all, as if she wasn't agoing to give ye the same chances of getting home as the *Airly Marn* dew. Only hope she'll receive ye.'

'Bound to it,' rumbled Jacob, 'if so be as her cap'n's a *man*.'

I turned to Helga.

'Do I decide wisely?'

'Yes, Hugh,' she answered. 'I hate to think of you lying in that cold space there throughout the nights. The two poor fellows,' she added softly, 'are

generous, kind, large-hearted men, and I shrink from the thought of the mad adventure they have engaged in. But,' said she, with a little smile and a faint touch of colour in her cheeks, as though she spoke reluctantly, 'the *Early Morn* is very uncomfortable.'

'All we have now to pray for is that the captain of that vessel will take us on board,' said I, fixing my eyes on the ship, that was yet too distant for the naked sight to make anything of. 'I suppose, Abraham,' I spoke out, turning to the man, 'that you will request them to give you a boom for a spare mast?'

'Vy, ask yourself the question, sir,' he answered.

'But suppose they have no spare booms, and are unable to accommodate you?'

'Then,' said he, 'we must up with that there stick,' pointing with his square thumb to the mast that had carried away on the previous night, 'and blow along till we meets with something that *will* accommodate us.'

'But, honestly, men—are you in earnest in your resolution to pursue this voyage to Australia? You

two—the crew now half the working strength you started with—a big boat of eighteen tons to handle, and——' I was on the point of referring to the slenderness of his skill as a navigator, but, happily, snapped my lips in time to silence the words.

Abraham eyed me a moment, then gave me a huge, emphatic nod, and, without remark, turned his back upon me in 'longshore fashion, and leisurely looked around the ocean line.

'Men,' said I, 'that ship may take us aboard, and in the bustle I may miss the chance of saying what is in my mind. My name is Hugh Tregarthen, as you know, and I live at Tintrenale, which you have likewise heard me say. I came away from home in a hurry to get alongside the ship that this brave girl's father commanded; and as I was then, so am I now, without a single article of value upon me worthy of your acceptance; for, as to my watch, it was my father's, and I must keep it. But if it should please God, men, to bring us all safely to England again, then, no matter when you two may return, whether in twelve months hence or twelve years hence, you will find set apart for you, at the little bank in Tintrenale,

a sum of fifty pounds—which you will take as signifying twenty-five pounds from Miss Helga Nielsen, and twenty-five pounds from me.'

'We thank you koindly, sir,' said Jacob.

'Let us get home, first,' said Abraham; 'yet, I thank ye koindly tew, Mr. Tregarthen,' he added, rounding upon me again and extending his rough hand.

I grasped and held it with eyes suffused by the emotion of gratitude which possessed me: then Jacob shook hands with me, and then the poor fellows shook hands with Helga, whose breath I could hear battling with a sob in her throat as she thanked them for her life and for their goodness to her.

But every minute was bringing the ship closer, and now I could think of nothing else. Would she back her topsail and come to a stand? Would she at any moment shift her helm and give us a wide berth? Would she, if she came to a halt, receive Helga and me? These were considerations to excite a passion of anxiety in me. Helga's eyes, with a clear blue gleam in them, were fixed upon the oncoming vessel; but the agitation, the hurry of emotions in her little

heart, showed in the trembling of her nostrils and the contraction of her white brow, where a few threads of her pale-gold hair were blowing.

Jacob pulled the Jack out of the locker, and attached it to the long staff or pole, and fell to waving it as before, when the Hamburger hove into view. The ship came along slowly, but without deviating by a hair's breadth from her course, that was on a straight line with the lugger. She was still dim in the blue, windy air, but determinable to a certain extent, and now with the naked vision I could distinguish her as a barque or ship of about the size of the *Anine*, her hull black and a row of painted ports running along either side. She sat somewhat high upon the water, as though she were half empty or her cargo very light goods; but she was neat aloft—different, indeed, from the Hamburger. Her royals were stowed in streaks of snow upon their yards, but the rest of her canvas was spread, and it showed in soft, fair bosoms of white, and the cloths carried, indeed, an almost yacht-like brilliance as they steadily swung against the steely gray of the atmosphere of the horizon. The ship pitched somewhat heavily as she

came, and the foam rose in milky clouds to the hawse-pipes with a regular alternation of the lifting out of the round, wet, black bows, and a flash of sunshine off the streaming timbers. From time to time Jacob flourished his flagstaff, all of us, meanwhile, waiting and watching in silence. Presently, Abraham put his little telescope to his eye, and, after a pause, said :

'She means to heave-to.'

'How can you tell?' I cried.

'I can see some figures a-standing by the weather mainbraces,' said he; 'and every now and again there's a chap, aft, bending his body over the rail to have a look at us.'

His 'longshore observation proved correct. Indeed, your Deal boatman can interpret the intentions of a ship as you are able to read the passions in the human face. When she was within a few of her own lengths of us, the mainsail having previously been hauled up, the yards on the mainmast were swung, and the vessel's way arrested. Her impulse, which appeared to have been very nicely calculated, brought her surging, foaming, and rolling to almost abreast of us,

within reach of the fling of a line before she came to a dead stand. I instantly took notice of a crowd of chocolate-visaged men standing on the forecastle, staring at us, with a white man on the cathead, and a man aft on the poop, with a white wideawake and long yellow whiskers.

'Barque ahoy!' bawled Abraham, for the vessel proved to be of that rig, though it was not to have been told by us as she approached head on.

'Hallo!' shouted the man in the white wideawake.

'For God's sake, sir,' shouted Abraham, 'heave us a line, that we may haul alongside! We're in great distress, and there's a couple of parties here as wants to get aboard ye.'

'Heave them a line!' shouted the fellow aft, sending his voice to the forecastle.

'Look out for it!' bawled the white man on the heel of the cathead within the rail.

A line lay ready, as though our want had been foreseen; with sailorly celerity the white man gathered it into fakes, and in a few moments the coils were flying through the air. Jacob caught the rope with the unerring clutch of a boatman, and the three of us,

stretching our backs at it, swung the lugger to the vessel's quarter.

'What is it you want?' cried the long-whiskered man, looking down at us over the rail.

'We'll come aboard and tell you, sir,' answered Abraham. 'Jacob, you mind the lugger! Now, Mr. Tregarthen, watch your chance and jump into them channels [meaning the mizzen chains], and I'll stand by to help the lady up to your hands. Ye'll want narve, miss! Can ye do it?'

Helga smiled.

I jumped on to a thwart, planting one foot on the gunwale in readiness. The rolling of the two craft, complicated, so to speak, by the swift jumps of the lugger as compared with the slow stoops of the barque, made the task of boarding ticklish even to me, who had had some experience in gaining the decks of ships in heavy weather. I waited. Up swung the boat, and over came the leaning side of the barque: then I sprang, and successfully, and, instantly turning, waited to catch hold of Helga.

Abraham took her under the arms as though to lift her towards me when the opportunity came.

'I can manage alone—I shall be safer alone!' she exclaimed, giving him a smile and then setting her lips

She did as I had done—stood on a thwart, securely planting one foot on the gunwale; and even in such a moment as that I could find mind enough to admire the beauty of her figure and the charming grace of her posture as her form floated perpendicularly upon the staggering motions of the lugger.

'Now, Hugh!' she cried, as her outstretched hands were borne up to the level of mine. I caught her. She sprang, and was at my side in a breath.

'Nobly done, Helga,' said I: 'now over the rail with us.'

She stopped to call Abraham with a voice in which I could trace no hurry of breathing: 'Will you please hand me up my little parcel?'

This was done, and a minute later we had gained the poop of the barque.

The man with the long whiskers advanced to the break of the short poop or upper deck as Helga and I ascended the ladder that led to it. He seized the brim of his hat, and, without lifting it, bowed his head

as though to the tug he gave, and said with a slightly nasal accent by no means Yankee, but of the kind that is common to the denomination of 'tub-thumpers':

'I suppose you are the two distressed parties the sailor in the lugger called out about?'

'We are, sir,' said I. 'May I take it that you are the captain of this barque?'

'You may,' he responded, with his eyes fixed on Helga. 'Captain Joppa Bunting, master of the barque *Light of the World*, from the river Thames for Table Bay, with a small cargo *and* for orders. That gives you everything, sir,' said he.

He pulled at his long whiskers with a complacent smile, now contemplating me and now Helga.

'Captain Bunting,' said I, 'this lady and myself are shipwrecked people, very eager indeed to get home. We have met with some hard adventures, and this lady, the daughter of the master of the barque *Anine*, has not only undergone the miseries of shipwreck, the hardships of a raft, and some days of wretchedness aboard that open boat alongside: she has been afflicted, besides, by the death of her father.'

'Very sorry indeed to hear it, miss,' said the Captain; 'but let this be your consolation, that every man's earthly father is bound to die at some time or other, but man's Heavenly Father remains with him for ever.'

Helga bowed her head. Language of this kind in the mouth of a plain sea-captain comforted me greatly as a warrant of goodwill and help.

'I'm sure,' said I, 'I may count upon your kindness to receive this lady and me and put us aboard the first homeward-bound ship that we may encounter.'

'Why, of course, it is my duty as a Christian man,' he answered, 'to be of service to all sorrowing persons that I may happen to fall in with. A Deal lugger—as I may presume your little ship to be—is no fit abode for a young lady of sweet-and-twenty——'

He was about to add something, but at that moment Abraham came up the ladder, followed by the white man whom I had noticed standing on the forecastle.

'What can I do for you, my man?' said the Captain, turning to Abraham.

'Whoy, sir, it's loike this——' began Abraham.

'He wants us to give him a spare boom to serve as a mast, sir,' clipped in the other, who, as I presently got to know, was the first mate of the vessel—a sandy-haired, pale-faced man, with the lightest-blue eyes I had ever seen, a little pimple of a nose, which the sun had caught, and which glowed red, in violent contrast with his veal-coloured cheeks. He was dressed in a plain suit of pilot-cloth, with a shovel peaked cap; but the old pair of carpet slippers he wore gave him a down-at-heels look.

'A spare boom!' cried the Captain. 'That's a big order, my lad. Why, the sight of your boat made me think I hadn't got rid of the Downs yet! There's no hovelling to be done down here, is there?'

'They're carrying out the boat to Australia, sir!' said the mate.

The Captain looked hard at Abraham.

'For a consideration, I suppose?' said he.

'Ay, sir, for a consideration, as you say,' responded Abraham, grinning broadly, and clearly very much gratified by the Captain's reception of him.

'Then,' said the Captain, pulling down his whiskers

and smiling with an expression of self-complacency not to be conveyed in words, 'I do not for a moment doubt that you *are* carrying that lugger to Australia, for my opinion of the Deal boatmen is this: that for a consideration they would carry their immortal souls to the gates of the devil's palace, and then return to their public-houses, get drunk on the money they had received, and roll about bragging how they had bested Old Nick himself! Spare boom for a mast, eh?' he continued, peering into Abraham's face. 'What's your name, my man?'

'Abraham Vise,' answered the boatman, apparently too much astonished as yet to be angry.

'Well, see here, friend Abraham,' said the Captain turning up his eyes and blandly pointing aloft, 'my ship isn't a forest, and spare booms don't grow aboard us. And yet,' said he, once again peering closely into Abraham's face, 'you're evidently a fellow-Christian in distress, and it's my duty to help you! I suppose you *are* a Christian?'

'Born one!' answered Abraham.

'Then, Mr. Jones,' exclaimed the Captain, 'go round the ship with friend Abraham Vise, and

see what's to be come at in the shape of a spare boom. Off with you now! Time's time on the ocean, and I can't keep my tops'l aback all day.'

The two men went off the poop. The Captain asked me my name, then inquired Helga's, and said, 'Mr. Tregarthen, and you, Miss Nielsen, I will ask you to step below. I have a drop of wine in my cabin, and a glass of it can hurt neither of you. Come along, if you please;' and, so saying, he led the way to a little companion-hatch, down which he bundled, with Helga and myself in his wake; and I recollect, as I turned to put my foot upon the first of the steps, that I took notice (with a sort of wonder in me that passed through my mind with the velocity of thought) of the lemon-coloured face of a man standing at the wheel, with such a scowl upon his brow, that looked to be withered by the sun to the aspect of the rind of a rotten orange, and with such a fierce, glaring expression in his dusky eyes, the pupils of which lay like a drop of ink slowly filtering out upon a slip of coloured blotting-paper, that but for the hurry I was in to follow the Captain I must have

lingered to glance again and yet again at the strange, fierce, forbidding creature.

We entered a plain little state-cabin, or living-room, filled with the furniture that is commonly to be seen in craft of this sort—a table, lockers, two or three chairs, a swinging tray, a lamp, and the like. The Captain asked us to sit, and disappeared in a berth forward of the state-cabin; but he returned too speedily to suffer Helga and me to exchange words. He put a bottle of marsala upon the table, took the wine-glasses from a rack affixed to a beam, and produced from a side-locker a plate of mixed biscuits. He filled the glasses, and, with his singular smile and equally curious bow, drank our healths, adding that he hoped to have the pleasure of speedily transhipping us.

He had removed his wideawake hat, and there was nothing, for the moment, to distract me from a swift but comprehensive survey of him. He had a long hooked nose, small, restless eyes, and hair so plentiful that it curled upon his back. His cheeks were perfectly colourless, and of an unwholesome dinginess, and hung very fat behind his long whiskers, and I

found him remarkable for the appearance of his mouth, the upper lip of which was as thick as the lower. He might have passed very well for a London tradesman—a man who had become almost bloodless through long years of serving behind a counter in a dark shop. He had nothing whatever of the sailor in his aspect—I do not mean the theatrical sailor, our old friend of the purple nose and grog-blossomed skin, but of that ordinary every-day mariner whom one may meet with in thousands in the docks of Great Britain. But that, however, which I seemed to find most remarkable in him was his smile. It was the haunting of his countenance by the very spectre of mirth. There was no life, no sincerity in it. Nevertheless, it caused a perpetual play of features more or less defined, informed by an expression which made one instantly perceive that Captain Joppa Bunting had the highest possible opinion of himself.

He asked me for my story, and I gave it him, he, meanwhile, listening to me with his singular smile, and his eyes almost embarrassingly rooted upon my face.

'Ah!' cried he, fetching a deep sigh, 'a noble cause

is the lifeboat service. Heaven bless its sublime efforts! and it is gratifying to know that her Majesty the Queen is a patron of the institution. Mr. Tregarthen, your conscience should be very acceptable to you, sir, when you come to consider that but for you this charming young lady must have perished'—he motioned towards Helga with an ungainly inclination of his body.

'I think, Captain,' said I, 'you must put it the other way about—I mean, that but for Miss Nielsen *I* must have perished.'

'Nielsen — Nielsen,' said he, repeating the word. 'That is not an English name, is it?'

'Captain Nielsen was a Dane,' said I.

'But you are not a Dane, madam?' he exclaimed.

'My mother was English,' she answered; 'but I am a Dane, nevertheless.'

'What is the religion of the Danes?' he asked.

'We are a Protestant people,' she answered, while I stared at the man, wondering whether he was perfectly sound in his head, for nothing could seem more malapropos at such a time as this than his questions about, and his references to, religion.

'What is your denomination, madam?' he asked, smiling, with a drag at one long whisker.

'I thought I had made you understand that I was a Protestant,' she answered, with an instant's petulance.

'There are many sorts of Protestants!' he exclaimed.

'Have you not a black crew?' said I, anxious to change the subject, sending a glance in search of Abraham through the window of the little door that led on to the quarterdeck, and that was framed on either hand by a berth or sleeping-room, from one of which the Captain had brought the wine.

'Yes, my crew are black,' said he; 'black here'—he touched his face—'and, I fear, black here'—he put his hand upon his heart. 'But I have some hope of crushing one superstition out of them before we let go our anchor in Table Bay!'

As he said these words a sudden violent shock was to be felt in the cabin, as though, indeed, the ship, as she dropped her stern into the trough, had struck the ground. All this time the vessel had been rolling and plunging somewhat heavily as she lay with her

topsail to the mast in the very swing of the sea; but after the uneasy feverish friskings of the lugger, the motion was so long-drawn, so easy, so comfortable, in a word, that I had sat and talked scarcely sensible of it. But the sudden shock could not have been more startling, more seemingly violent, had a big ship driven into us. A loud cry followed. Captain Bunting sprang to his feet; at the same moment there was a hurried tramp and rush of footsteps overhead, and more cries. Captain Bunting ran to the companion-steps, up which he hopped with incredible activity.

'I fear the lugger has been driven against the vessel's side!' said Helga.

'Oh, Heaven, yes!' I cried. 'But I trust, for the poor fellows' sake, she is not injured. Let us go on deck!'

We ran up the steps, and the very first object I saw as I passed through the hatch was Jacob's face, purple with the toil of climbing, rising over the rail on the quarter. Abraham and two or three coloured men grasped the poor fellow, and over he floundered on to the deck, streaming wet.

Helga and I ran to the side to see what had happened. There was no need to look long. Directly under the ship's quarter lay the lugger with the water sluicing into her. The whole of one side of her was crushed as though an army of workmen had been hammering at her with choppers. We had scarcely time to glance before she was gone! A sea foamed over and filled her out of hand, and down she went like a stone, with a snap of the line that held her, as though it had been thread, to the lift of the barque from the drowning fabric.

'Gone!' cried I. 'Heaven preserve us! What will our poor friends do?'

Captain Bunting was roaring out in true sea-fashion. He might continue to smile, indeed; but his voice had lost its nasal twang.

'How did this happen?' he bawled. 'Why on earth wasn't the lugger kept fended off? Mr. Jones, jump into that quarter-boat and see if we've received any injury.'

The mate hopped into the boat, and craned over. 'It seems all right with us, sir!' he cried.

'Well, then, how did this happen?' exclaimed the

Captain, addressing Jacob, who stood, the very picture of distress and dejection, with the water running away upon the deck from his feet, and draining from his finger-ends as his arms hung up and down as though he stood in a shower-bath.

'I'd gone forward,' answered the poor fellow, 'to slacken away the line that the lugger might drop clear, and then it happened, and that's all I know;' and here he slowly turned his half-drowned, bewildered face upon Abraham, who was staring over the rail down upon the sea where the lugger had sunk, as though rendered motionless by a stroke of paralysis.

'Well, and what'll you do now?' cried Captain Bunting.

'Do? Whoy, chuck myself overboard!' shouted Jacob, apparently quickened into his old vitality by the anguish of sudden realization.

Here Abraham slowly looked round, and then turned and lay against the rail, eyeing us lifelessly.

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTAIN JOPPA BUNTING.

THERE were four or five coloured seamen standing near, looking on. Though I could not have been sure, I guessed them to be Malays by the somewhat Chinese cast of their features. I had seen such faces once before, discolouring a huddle of white countenances of European seamen looking over the side of a ship, anchored in our bay, at the lifeboat I was in charge of for an hour or two of practice. I also caught the fierce lemon-coloured creature at the wheel following the Captain, as he moved about, with his stealthy dusky eyes; but more than this I had not time to take notice of.

'Abraham,' I exclaimed, approaching him, 'this is a bad business.'

'Ay,' he muttered, drying his lips upon his knuckles.

'There's nothen to do now but to get home again. I laid out fifteen pound for myself on this here job, an it's gone, and gone's, too, the money we was to take up. Oh, Jacob, matey! how came it about? how came it about?' he cried, in a voice of bitter grief that was without the least hint of temper or reproach.

'Ye've heard, Abraham,' answered the other, speaking brokenly. 'Gord He knows how it happened. I'd ha' given ten toimes ower the money we was to airn that this here mucking job had been yourn instead o' mine, that I might feel as sorry for ye, Abey, as ye are for me, mate.'

'Is she clean gone?' cried Captain Bunting, looking over the quarter. 'Yes, clean. Nothing but her boat floating, and a few spars. It is spilt milk, and not to be recovered by tears. You two men will have to go along with us till we can send the four of you home. Mr. Jones, fill on your topsail, if you please. Hi! you Pallunappachelly, swab up that wet there, d'ye hear? Now Moona, now Yong Soon Wat, and you, Shayoo Saibo—maintopsail-brace, and bear a hand!'

While the topsail-yard was in the act of swinging

I observed that Abraham's countenance suddenly changed. A fit of temper, resembling his outbreak when the Hamburger had passed us, darkened his face. He rolled his eyes fiercely, then, plucking off his cap, flung it savagely down upon the deck, and, while he tumbled and sprawled about in a sort of mad dance, he bawled at the top of his voice:

'I says it *can't* be true! What I says is, it's a dream—a blooming, measly dream! The *Airly Marn* foundered!' Here he gave his cap a kick that sent it flying the length of the poop. 'It's a loie, I says. It was to ha' been seventy-foive pound a man, and there was two gone, whose shares would ha' been ourn. And where's moy fifteen pound vorth o' goods? Cuss the hour, I says, that ever we fell in with this barque!'

He raved in this fashion for some minutes, the Captain meanwhile eyeing him with his head on one side, as though striving to find out whether he was drunk or mad. He then rushed to the side with an impetuosity that made me fear he meant to spring overboard, and, looking down for a moment, he bellowed forth, shaking his clenched fist at the sea:

'Yes, then she *is* gone, and 'tain't a dream!'

He fetched his thigh a mighty slap, and, wheeling round, stared at us in the manner of one temporarily bereft of his senses by the apparition of something he finds horrible.

'These Deal boatmen have excitable natures!' said Captain Joppa Bunting, addressing me, fixedly smiling, and passing his fingers through a whisker as he spoke.

'I trust you will bear with the poor fellows,' said I: 'it is a heavy loss to the men, and a death-blow to big expectations.'

'Temper is excusable occasionally at sea,' observed the Captain; 'but language I never permit. Yet that unhappy Christian soul ought to be borne with, as you say, seeing that he is a poor ignorant man very sorely tried. Abraham Vise, come here!' he called.

'His name is Wise,' said I.

'Wise, come here!' he shouted.

Abraham approached us with a slow, rolling gait, and a face in which temper was now somewhat clouded by bewilderment.

'Abraham,' said the Captain, looking from him to

Jacob, who leaned, wet through, against the rail with a dogged face and his eyes rooted upon the deck, 'you have met with one of those severe reverses which happen entirely for the good of the sufferer, however he may object to take that view. Depend upon it, my man, that the loss of your lugger is for some wise purpose.'

Abraham looked at him with an eye whose gaze delivered the word *damn* as articulately as ever his lips could have uttered the oath.

'You two men were going in that small open boat to Australia,' continued the Captain, with a paternal air and a nasal voice, and smiling always. 'Do you suppose you would ever have reached that distant coast?'

'Sartainly I dew, sir,' cried Abraham hoarsely, with a vehement nod.

'I say *no*, then!' thundered the Captain. '*Two* of you! Why, I've fallen in with smaller luggers than yours cruising in the Channel with eight of a crew.'

'Ay!' shouted Abraham. 'And vy? Only ask yourself the question! 'Cause they carry men to ship as pilots. But tew can handle a lugger.'

'I say no!' thundered the Captain again. 'What? All the way from the Chops to Sydney Bay. Who's your navigator?'

'Oy am,' answered Abraham.

The Captain curved his odd, double-lipped mouth into a sneer, that yet somehow did not disguise or alter his habitual or congenital smile, while he ran his eye over the boatman's figure.

'You!' he cried, pausing and bursting into a loud laugh; then, resuming his nasal intonation, he continued. 'Mark you this now. The loss of your lugger alongside my barque is a miracle wrought by a bountiful Heaven to extend your existence, which you were deliberately attempting to cut short by a dreadful act of folly, so dreadful that had you perished by a like behaviour ashore you would have been buried with a stake through your middle.'

He turned up his eyes till little more than the whites of them were visible. Grieved as I was for poor Abraham, I scarcely saved myself from bursting out laughing, so ludicrous were the shifting emotions which worked in his face, and so absurd Jacob's fixed stare of astonishment and wrath.

'Now, men,' continued the Captain, 'you can go forward. What's *your* name?'

'Jacob Minnikin, sir,' answered the boatman, speaking thickly and with difficulty.

'Get you to the galley, Jacob Minnikin,' said the Captain, 'and dry your clothes. The chief mate will show you where to find a couple of spare bunks in the forecastle. Go and warm yourselves and get something to eat. You'll be willing to work, I hope, in return for my keeping you until I can send you home?'

Abraham sullenly mumbled, 'Yes, sir.'

'All right. We may not be long together; but while I have you I shall be thankful for you. We are a black crew, and the sight of a couple of white faces forward will do me good. Off you go, now!'

Without another word the two men trudged off the poop; but I could hear them muttering to each other as they went down the ladder.

Some time before this sail had been trimmed, and the barque was once again clumsily breaking the seas, making a deal of noisy sputtering at her cutwater to the stoop of her apple-shaped bows, and rolling

and plunging as though she were contending with the surge of Agulhas or the Horn. I sent my sight around the ocean, but there was nothing to be seen. The atmosphere had slightly thickened, and it was blowing fresh, but the wind was on the quarter, and the mate had found nothing in the weather to hinder him from showing the mainsail to it again with the port clew up. But the Captain's talk prevented me from making further observations at that time.

'Those two men,' said he, 'have very good, honest, substantial, Scriptural names. Abraham and Jacob,' he smacked his lips. 'I like 'em. I consider myself fortunate in the name of Joppa,' he continued, looking from me to Helga. 'I *might* have been called Robert.'

You would have thought that the smile which accompanied this speech was designed to point it as a joke, but a moment's observation assured me that it was a fixed expression.

'I have observed,' he went on, 'that the lower orders are very dull and tardy in arriving at an appreciation of the misfortunes which befall them. Those two men, sir, are not in the least degree

grateful for the loss of their lugger, by which, as I told them, their lives have been undoubtedly preserved.'

'They are poor men,' said Helga, 'and do not know how to be grateful for the loss of perhaps very nearly all that they have in the world.'

He looked at her smilingly, with a glance down her figure, and exclaimed, 'I am quite sure that when your poor dear father's barque sank *you* did not resent the decree of Heaven.'

Helga held her peace.

'Was she insured, madam?' he asked.

She answered briefly 'Yes,' not choosing to enter into explanations.

He surveyed her thoughtfully, with his head on one side; then, addressing me, he said:

'The man Abraham, now. I take it he was skipper of the lugger?'

'Yes, he was so,' said I.

'Is it possible that he knows anything of navigation?'

'I fear his acquaintance with that art is small. He can blunder upon the latitude with the aid of an old

quadrant, but he leaves his longitude to dead reckoning.'

'And yet he was going to Australia!' cried the Captain, tossing his pale, fleshly hands and upturning his eyes. 'Still, he is a respectable man?'

'A large-hearted, good man,' cried Helga warmly.

He surveyed her again thoughtfully with his head on one side, slowly combing down one whisker, then addressing me:

'I am rather awkwardly situated,' said he. 'Mr. Ephraim Jones and myself are the only two white men aboard this vessel. Jones is an only mate. You know what that means?'

I shook my head in my ignorance, with a glance at Helga.

'Captain Bunting means,' she answered, smiling, 'that only mate is literally the only mate that is carried in a ship.'

He stared at her with lifted eyebrows, and then gave her a bow.

'Right, madam,' said he. 'And when you are married, dear lady, you will take all care, I trust, that your husband shall be *your* only mate.'

She slightly coloured, and as she swayed to the rolling deck I caught sight of her little foot petulantly beating the plank for a moment. It was clear that Captain Bunting was not going to commend himself to her admiration by his wit.

'You were talking about Abraham,' said I.

'No, I was talking about Jones,' he answered, 'and attempting to explain the somewhat unpleasant fix I am in. The man who acted as second mate was the carpenter of the barque, a fellow named Winstanley. I fear he went mad, after we were a day out. Whether he jumped overboard or fell overboard, I cannot say.' He made a wild grimace, as though the recollection shocked him. 'There was nothing for it but to pursue the voyage with my only mate; and I, of course, have to keep watch-and-watch with him—a very great inconvenience to me. I believe Abraham Wise—or Vise, as he calls himself—would excellently fill Winstanley's place.'

'He wants to get home,' said I.

'Yet I might tempt him to remain with me,' said he, smiling. 'There's no melody so alluring to a Deal boatman's ears as the jingling of silver dollars.'

'You will find him thoroughly trustworthy,' said Helga.

'We will wait a little—we will wait a little!' he exclaimed blandly.

'Of course, Captain Bunting,' said I, 'your views in the direction of Abraham will not, I am sure, hinder you from sending Miss Nielsen and myself to England at the very earliest opportunity.' And I found my eye going seawards over the barque's bow as I spoke.

'The very first vessel that comes along you shall be sent aboard of, providing, to be sure, she will receive you.'

I thanked him heartily, and also added, in the most delicate manner I could contrive on the instant, that all expense incurred by his keeping us should be defrayed. He flourished his fat hand.

'That is language to address to the Pharisee, sir—not to the Samaritan.'

All this was exceedingly gratifying. My spirits rose, and I felt in a very good humour with him. He looked at his watch.

'Five o'clock,' said he. 'Mr. Jones,' he called to

the mate, who was standing forward at the head of the little poop ladder, 'you can go below and get your supper, then relieve me. Tell Punmeamootty to put some cold beef and pickles on the table. Better let him set the ham on too, and tell the fool that it won't bite him. Punmeamootty can make some coffee, Mr. Jones; or perhaps you drink tea?' said he, turning to Helga. 'Well, *both,* Mr. Jones, *both,*' he shouted: 'tea *and* coffee. Make a good meal, sir, and then come and relieve me.'

The mate vanished. Captain Bunting drew back by a step or two to cast a look aloft. He then, and with a sailorly eye methought, despite his whiskers and dingy fleshy face and fixed smile, sent a searching glance to windward, following it on with a cautious survey of the horizon. He next took a peep at the compass, and said something to a mahogany-coloured man who had replaced the fierce-looking fellow at the wheel. I observed that when the Captain approached the man stirred uneasily in his shoes, 'twixt which and the foot of his blue dungaree breeches there lay visible the bare, yellow flesh of his ankles.

I said softly and quickly to Helga, 'This is a very extraordinary shipmaster.'

'Something in him repels me,' she answered.

'He is behaving kindly and hospitably, though.'

'Yes, Hugh; still, I shall be glad to leave the barque. What a very strange crew the ship carries! What are they?'

'I will ask him,' said I, and at that moment he rejoined us.

'Captain,' I exclaimed, 'what countrymen are your sailors, pray?'

'Mostly Malays, with a few Cingalese among them,' he answered. 'I got them on a sudden, and was glad of them, I can tell you. I had shipped an ordinary European crew in the Thames; and in the Downs, where we lay wind-bound for three days, every man-jack of them, saving Mr. Jones and Winstanley, lowered that quarter-boat,' said he, nodding to it, 'one dark night, chucked their traps in and went away for Dover round the South Foreland. I recovered the boat, and was told that there was a crew of Malays lodged at the Sailors' Home at Dover. A vessel from Ceylon that had touched at the Cape

and taken in some coloured seamen there had stranded, a night or two before my men ran, somewhere off the South Sand Head. She was completely wrecked, and her crew were brought to Dover. There were eleven of them in all, with a boss or bo's'n or serang, call him what you will—there he is!' He pointed to a dark-skinned fellow on the forecastle. 'Well, to cut the story short, when these fellows heard I was bound to the Cape they were all eager to ship. They offered their services for very little money—very little money indeed,' he added, smiling, 'their object being to get home. I had no idea of being detained in the Downs for a crew, and I had no heart, believe me, to swallow another dose of the British merchant sailor, so I had them brought aboard—and there they are!' he exclaimed, gazing complacently forward and aft, 'but they are black inside and out. They're Mahometans, to a man, and now I'm sorry I shipped them, though I hope to do good—yes,' said he, nodding at me, 'I hope to do good.'

He communicated to this final sentence all the significance that it was in the power of his countenance and manner to bestow; but what he meant I did

not trouble myself to inquire. Mr. Jones remained below about ten minutes: he then arrived, and the Captain, who was asking Helga questions about her father's ship, the cause of her loss, and the like, instantly broke off on seeing the mate, and asked us to follow him to the cabin.

The homely interior looked very hospitable, with its table cleanly draped and pleasantly equipped with provisions. The coloured man who apparently acted as steward, and who bore the singular name of Punmeamootty, stood, a dusky shadow, near the cabin-door. Spite of a smoky sunset in the western windy haze, the gloom of the evening in the east was already upon the ocean, and the cabin, as we entered it, showed somewhat darksome to the sight; yet though the figure of the Malay, as I have already said, was no more than a shadow, I could distinctly see his gleaming eyes even from the distance of the companion steps; and I believe had it been much darker still I should have beheld his eyes looking at us from the other end of the cabin.

'Light the lamp, Punmeamootty!' said the Captain. 'Now, let me see,' said he, throwing his wideawake

on to a locker; 'at sea we call the last meal supper, Miss Nielsen.'

'Yes, I know that,' she answered.

'Before we go to supper,' he continued, 'you would like to refresh yourself in a cabin. How about accommodating you, Mr. Tregarthen? That cabin is mine,' said he, pointing, 'and the one facing it is Mr. Jones's. There are four gloomy little holes below, one of which was occupied by poor Winstanley, and the others, I fear, are choke full of stores and odds and ends.' He eyed her for a moment meditatively. 'Come,' said he: 'you are a lady, and must be made comfortable, however short your stay with me may be. Mr. Jones will give up his cabin, and go into the steerage!'

'And Mr. Tregarthen?' said Helga.

'Oh, I'll set some of our darkeys after supper to make ready one of the berths below for him.'

'I do not wish to be separated from Mr. Tregarthen,' said Helga.

Captain Bunting looked at her, then at me, then at her left hand, for the coloured steward had now lighted the lamp and we were conversing close to it.

'You are Miss Nielsen?' said the Captain. 'Have I mistaken?'

The blood rose to the girl's cheek.

'No, you have not mistaken,' said I; 'Miss Nielsen and I have now for some days been fellow-sufferers, and, for acquaintance' sake, she wishes her berth to be near mine!'

This I said soothingly, for I thought the skipper's brow looked a little clouded.

'Be it so,' said he, with a bland flourish of both hands: 'meanwhile, madam, such conveniences as my cabin affords are at your service for immediate use.'

She hesitated, but on meeting my eye seemed immediately to catch what was in my mind, and, smiling prettily, she thanked him, and went at once to his cabin.

'The fact is, sir,' said he nasally, dragging at the wristband of his shirt and looking at his nails, 'man at the best is but a very selfish animal, and cruelly neglectful of the comfort and happiness of women. Pardon my frankness: your charming companion has been exposed for several days to the horrors of what

was really no better than an open boat. What more natural than that she should wish to adjust her hair and take a peep at herself in a looking-glass? And yet'—here he smiled profoundly—'the suggestion that she should withdraw did not come from *you*.'

'The kindness of your reception of us,' I answered, 'assured me that you would do everything that is necessary.'

'Quite so,' he answered; 'and now, Mr. Tregarthen, I dare say a brush-up will comfort you too. You will find all that you require in Mr. Jones's cabin.'

I thanked him, and at once entered the berth, hardly knowing as yet whether to be amused or astonished by the singular character of this long-whiskered, blandly smiling, and, as I might fairly believe, religious sea-captain.

There was a little window in the berth that looked on to the quarter-deck. On peering through it I spied Abraham and Jacob with their arms buried to the elbow in their breeches' pockets, leaning, with dogged mien, in the true loafing, lounging, 'longshore posture, against the side of the caboose or galley. The whole

ship's company seemed to have gathered about them. I counted nine men. There was a rusty tinge in the atmosphere that gave me a tolerable sight of all those people. It was the first dog-watch, when the men would be free to hang about the decks and smoke and talk. The coloured sailors formed a group, in that dull hectic light, to dwell upon the memory—one with a yellow sou'-wester, another with a soldier's forage-cap on his head, a third in a straw hat, along with divers scarecrow-like costumes of dungaree and coarse canvas jumpers—here a jacket resembling an evening-dress coat that had been robbed of its tails, there a pair of flapping skirts, a red wool comforter, half-wellington boots, old shoes, and I know not what besides.

The man that had been pointed out to me as 'boss'—to employ Captain Bunting's term—was addressing the two boatmen as I looked. He was talking in a low voice, and not the slightest growl of his accents reached me. Now and again he would smite his hands and act as though betrayed by temper into a sudden vehement delivery, from which he swiftly recovered himself, so to speak, with an eager look aft

at the poop-deck, where, I might suppose, the mate stood watching them, or where, at all events, he would certainly be walking, on the look-out. While he addressed the boatmen, the others stood doggedly looking on, all, apparently, intent upon the countenances of our Deal friends, whose attitude was one of contemptuous inattention.

However, by this time I had refreshed myself with a wash, and now quitted the cabin after a slight look round, in which I took notice of the portrait of a stout lady cut out in black paper and pasted upon a white card, a telescope, a sextant case, a little battery of pipes in a rack over the bunk.

Helga arrived, holding her sealskin hat in her hand. Her amber-coloured hair—for sometimes I would think it of this hue, at others a pale gold, then a very fine delicate yellow—showed with a little roughness in it, as though she were fresh from the blowing of the wind. But had she been an artist she could not have expressed more choiceness in her fashion of neglect. She had heartened and brightened greatly since our rescue from the raft, and, though there were still many traces of her grief and sufferings in her face, there

was likewise the promise that she needed but a very short term of good usage from life to bloom into as sweet, modest, and gentle a maiden as a man's heart could wish to hold to itself.

The Captain, motioning us to our places, took his seat at the head of the table with a large air of hospitality in his manner of drawing out his whiskers and inflating his waistcoat. The vessel creaked and groaned noisily as she pitched and rolled, so slanting the table that, but for the rough, well-used fiddles, every article upon it would have speedily tumbled on to the deck. The lamp burned brightly, and almost eclipsed the rusty complexion of daylight that lay upon the glass of the little skylight directly over our heads.

Punmeamootty waited nimbly upon us, though my immediate impression was that his alacrity was not a little animated by fear and dislike. As the Captain sat smilingly recommending the ham that he was carving—dwelling much upon it, and talking of the pig as an animal on the whole more serviceable to man than the cow—I caught the coloured steward watching him as he stood some little distance away

upon the skipper's left, with his dusky shining eyes in the corner of their sockets. It reminded me of the look I had observed the fierce-looking fellow at the wheel fasten upon the Captain. It was as though the fellow cursed him with his dusky gaze. Yet there was nothing forbidding in his face, despite his ugliness. His skin was of the colour of the yolk of an egg, and he had a coarse heavy nose, which made me suspect a Dutch hand in the man's creation. His hair was coal black, long, and lank, after the Chinese pattern. It would have been hard to guess his age from such a mask of a face as he carried; but the few bristles on his upper lip suggested youth, and I dare say I was right in thinking him about two-and-twenty.

The Captain talked freely; sometimes he omitted his nasal twang; but his conversation was threaded with pious reflections, and I took notice of a tendency in the man to sermonize, as though little in the most familiar talk could occur out of which a salutary moral was not to be squeezed. He seemed to be very well pleased to have us on board, not perhaps so much because our company was a break as because it provided him with an opportunity to philosophize, and to

air his sentiments. I shall not be thought very grateful for thus speaking of a man who had rescued us from a trying and distressful situation, and who was entertaining us kindly, and, I may say, bountifully; but my desire is to give you the truth—to describe exactly as best I can what I saw and suffered in this strange passage of my life, and the portrait I am attempting of Captain Joppa Bunting is as the eyes of my head, and of my mind too, beheld him.

As I looked at him sitting at the table, of a veal-like complexion in that light, blandly gesticulating with his fat hands, expressing himself with a nasal gravity that was at times diverting with the smile that accompanied it, it seemed difficult to believe that he was a merchant captain, the master of as commonplace an old ocean waggon as ever crushed a sea with a round bow. I asked him how long he had followed the life, and he astonished me by answering that he was now forty-four, and that he had been apprenticed to the sea at the age of twelve.

'You will have seen a very great deal in that time, Captain,' said I.

'I believe there is no wonder of the Lord visible

upon the face of the deep which I have not viewed,' he responded. 'There is no part of the world which I have not visited. I have coasted the Antarctic zone of ice in a whaler, and I have been becalmed for seventeen weeks right off, with thirty miles of motion only in those seventeen weeks, upon the parallel of one degree north.'

On this I observed that Helga eyed him with interest, yet I seemed to be sensible, too, of an expression of recoil in her face, if I may thus express what I do not know how better to define.

'You have worn wonderfully well,' said I.

'I have taken care of myself,' he answered, smiling.

'Is this your ship, sir?'

'I have a large interest in her,' he replied. 'I am very well content to follow the sea. The sense of being watched over is comforting, and often exhilarating; but I wish,' he exclaimed, with a solemn wagging of his head, 'that the obligation to make money in this life was less, much less, than it is.'

'It is the only life in which we shall require money,' said Helga.

'True, madam,' said he, with an apparently careless

but puzzling glance at her; 'but let me tell you that the obligation of money-making soils the soul. I am not surprised that the godliest of the good men of old took up their abode in caves, were satisfied with roots for dinner, and were as happy in a sheep's-skin as a dandy in a costume by Poole. I defy a man to practise virtue and make money too. Punmeamootty, put some wine into the lady's glass!'

Helga declined. The Malay was moving swiftly to execute the order, but stopped dead on her saying no, and with insensible and mouse-like movements regained his former post, where he stood watching the Captain as before.

'Yes,' said I, 'this world would be a pleasant one if we could manage without money.'

'For myself,' said he, casting his eyes over the table, 'I could do very well with a crust of bread and a glass of water; but I have a daughter, Judith Ruby, and I have to work for her.'

This brought a little expression of sympathy into Helga's face.

'Is she your only daughter, Captain Bunting?' she asked.

'My only daughter,' he answered, with a momentary softening of his voice. 'I wish I had her here!' said he. 'You would find her, Miss Nielsen, a good, kind, religious girl. She is lonely in her home when I am away. I am a widower. My dear wife fell asleep six years ago.'

He sighed, but he was smiling too as he did so.

The windows of the skylight had now turned into gleaming ebony against the darkness of the evening outside, and reflected the white table-cloth and the sparkling glass and our figures as though it were a black polished mirror over our heads. I had taken notice of a sharper inclination in the heel of the barque when she rolled to leeward, and, though I was no sailor, yet my ears, accustomed to the noises of the coast, had caught a keener edge in the hum of the wind outside, a more fretful hiss in the stroke of every sea smiting the bends. An order was delivered from the deck above us and shortly afterwards, a singular sound of howling arose, accompanied with the slatting and flapping of canvas.

'Mr. Jones is taking the mainsail off her,' said the

Captain, 'but the glass is very steady. We shall have a fine night,' he added, smiling at Helga.

'Is that strange wailing noise made by the crew?' she asked.

'It is, madam. The Malays are scarcely to be called nightingales. They are pulling at the ropes, and they sing as they pull. It is a habit among sailors—but you do not require me to tell you that.'

'I believe there is very little in seamanship, Captain Bunting,' said I, 'that even you, with your long experience, could teach Miss Nielsen.'

She looked somewhat wistfully at me, as though she would discourage any references to her.

'Indeed!' he exclaimed. 'I should like to hear your nautical accomplishments.'

'It was my humour to assist my father when at sea,' she said, with her eyes fixed on the table.

'Now, what can you do?' said he, watching her. 'Pray tell me? A knowledge of the sea among your sex is so rare that a sailor could never value it too greatly in a lady.'

'Let me answer for Miss Nielsen, Captain,' I exclaimed carelessly, with a glance at the Malay

steward, whose gaze, like the Captain's, was also directed at Helga. 'She can put a ship about, she can steer, she can loose a jib, and run aloft as nimbly as the smartest sailor; she can stand a watch and work a ship in it, and she can take sights and give you a vessel's place on the chart—within a mile shall I say, Helga?'

He looked at me on my pronouncing the word 'Helga.' I do not know that I had before called the girl thus familiarly in his presence.

'You are joking, Mr. Tregarthen!' said he.

A little smile of appeal to me parted Helga's lips.

'No, no,' said I, 'I am not joking. It is all true. She is the most heroical of girls, besides. We owe our preservation to her courage and knowledge. Helga, may God bless you, and grant us a safe and speedy return to a home where, if the dear heart in it is still beating, we shall meet with a sweet welcome, be sure.'

'But you must not be in a hurry to return home,' exclaimed the Captain, turning his smiling countenance to Helga; 'you must give me time to tempt you to remain on board *The Light of the World*. Your qualifications as a sailor should make you an

excellent mate, and you will tell me how much a month you will take to serve in that capacity?'

I observed the same look of recoil in her face that I had before seen in it. A woman's instincts, thought I, are often amazingly keen in the interpretation of men's minds. Or is she merely nervous and sensitive with a gentle, pretty modesty and bashfulness which render direct allusions to her after this pattern distressing? For my part, I could find no more than what the French call badinage in the Captain's speech, with nothing to render it significant outside the bare meaning of the words in his looks or manner.

She did not answer him, and by way of changing the subject, being also weary of sitting at that table, for we had finished the meal some time, though the Malay continued to look on, as though waiting for the order to clear away, I pulled out my watch.

'A quarter to seven,' I exclaimed. 'You will not wish to be late to-night, Helga. You require a good long sleep. By this time to-morrow we may have shifted our quarters; but we shall always gratefully remember Captain Bunting's goodness.'

'That reminds me,' said he, 'your cabins must be

got ready. Punmeamootty, go forward and tell Nakier to send a couple of hands aft to clear out two of the berths below. No! tell Nakier I want him, and then come aft and clear the table.'

The man, gliding softly but moving swiftly, passed through the door that led on to the quarter-deck.

'I wish I could tempt you, Miss Nielsen,' continued the Captain, 'to take Mr. Jones's cabin. You will be so very much more comfortable there.'

'I would rather be near Mr. Tregarthen, thank you,' she answered.

'You are a fortunate man to be so favoured!' he exclaimed, smiling at me. 'However, every convenience that my cabin can supply shall be placed at Miss Nielsen's disposal. Alas! now, if my dear Judith were here! She would improve, by many womanly suggestions, my humble attempts as a Samaritan. Our proper business in this world, Mr. Tregarthen, is to do good to one another. But the difficulty,' he exclaimed with a sweep of his hand, 'is to do *all* the good that can be done! Now, for instance, I am at a loss. How am I to supply Miss Nielsen's needs?'

'They are of the simplest—are not they, Helga? said I.

'Quite the simplest, Captain Bunting,' she answered, and then, looking at him anxiously, she added: 'My one great desire now is to get to England. I have been the cause of taking Mr. Tregarthen from his mother, and I shall not feel happy until they are together again!'

'Charity forbid,' exclaimed the Captain, 'that I should question for an instant the heroism of Mr. Tregarthen's behaviour! But,' said he, slightly lowering his voice and stooping his smiling face at her, so to say, 'when your brave friend put off in the lifeboat he did not, I may take it, know that you were on board?'

'But I *was* on board,' she answered quickly: 'and he has saved my life, and I wish him to return to his mother, who may believe him drowned and be mourning him as dead!'

CHAPTER VII.

ON BOARD 'THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.'

AT that moment the man whom the Captain styled Nakier entered the little cuddy, followed by the steward. He made a singular gesture, a sort of salaam, bowing his head and whipping both hands to his brow, but with something of defiance in the celerity of the gesture. He was the man whom I had seen haranguing the two boatmen. He had a large, fine intelligent eye, liquid and luminous, despite the Asiatic duskiness of its pupil; his features were regular and almost handsome: an aquiline nose, thin and well chiselled at the nostrils, a square brow, small ears decorated with thick gold hoops, and teeth as though formed of china. The expression of his face was mild and even prepossessing, his complexion a light yellow. He bore in his hand what had apparently

been a soldier's foraging cap, and was dressed in an old pilot jacket, a red shirt, and a pair of canvas breeches held by a belt, to which was attached a sheath containing a knife lying tight against his hip. He took me and Helga in with a rapid roll of his handsome eyes, then looked straight at the Captain in a posture of attention, with a little contraction of the brow.

'I want a couple of the berths below cleared out at once,' said the Captain. 'Goh Syn Koh seems one of the smartest among you. Send him. Also send Mow Lauree. He can make a bed, I hope? He is making a bed for himself! Bear a hand and clear this table, Punmeamootty, so as to be able to assist. You'll superintend the work, Nakier. See all clean and comfortable.'

'Yaas, sah,' said the man.

He was going.

'Stop!' exclaimed the Captain, smiling all the time he continued to talk. 'Did you eat your dinner to-day!'

'No, sah.'

'What has become of it?'

'Overboard, sah,' answered the man, preserving his slight frown.

'Overboard! As good a mess of pork and pea-soup as was ever served out to a ship's company. Overboard! For the third time! If it happens again——' he checked himself with a glance at Helga: 'if it happens again,' he went on, speaking with an air of concern, 'I shall be obliged to stop the beef.'

'We cannot eat pork, sah—we are Mussulmans——' he was proceeding.

The Captain silenced him with a bland motion of the hand.

'Send the men aft, Nakier,' said he, with a small increase of nasal twang in his utterance, 'and see that the cleaning and the clearance out is thorough.'

He gave him a hard, significant nod, and the man marched out, directing an eager look at me as he wheeled round, as though for my sympathy.

Punmeamootty was clearing the table with much ill-dissembled agitation in the hurry of his movements: his swift glances went from the Captain to me, and then to Helga. They were like the flashing

of a stiletto, keen as the darting blue gleam of the blade, and they would be as murderous, too, I thought, if the man could execute his wishes with his eyes. I believed the Captain would now make some signal to leave the table, but he continued to sit on.

'Did you observe that man just now?' said he, addressing Helga. She answered 'Yes.' 'Handsome, do you think?' said he.

'He had a mild, pleasant face,' she answered.

'His name,' said he, 'is Vanjoor Nakier. He is boss of the native crew, and I allow him to act as a sort of boatswain. It is hard to reconcile so agreeable a countenance with the horrible and awful belief which must make him for ever and ever a lost soul, if he is not won over in plenty of time for repentance, for prayer and mortification.'

'You seem to have the fellows' names very pat,' said I. 'Are you acquainted with the Malay tongue?'

'Ah!' cried he, with a shake of the head; 'I wish I were. I might then prove a true missionary to the poor benighted fellows. Yet I shall hope to have broken heavily into their deplorable and degraded superstitions before I dismiss them at Cape Town.'

I caught sight of the shadowy form of the steward lurking abaft the companion-steps, where he seemed busy with some plates and a basket.

'It is your hope,' said I, 'to convert the Mussulmans?'

'It is my hope, indeed,' he answered; 'and, pray, what honester hope should possess a man?'

'It is an admirable desire,' said I, 'but a little dangerous perhaps.'

'Why?' asked he.

'Well,' said I, 'I am no traveller. I have seen nothing of the world, but I have read, and I have always gathered from books of voyages, that there is no class of men more bigoted in their faith and more treacherous in their conduct than Malay seamen.'

'Hush!' cried Helga, putting her finger to her lips and looking in the direction of the steward.

The Captain turned in his chair.

'Are you there, Punmeamootty?'

'Yes, sah;' and his figure came swiftly gliding into the light.

'Go below and help the others! They should be at work by this time.'

The man went out on to the quarter-deck, where, close against the cuddy front, lay the little hatch that conducted to the steerage.

'You are quite right,' exclaimed the Captain, lying back and expanding his waistcoat. 'Malay seamen are, undoubtedly, treacherous. In fact, treachery is part and parcel of the Malay character. It is the people of that nation who run amuck, you know.'

'What is that?' inquired Helga.

'A fellow falls crazy,' answered the Captain, smiling, 'whips out a weapon called a creese, and stabs and kills as many as he can encounter as he flies through the streets.'

'They are a people to live on good terms with,' said Helga, looking at me.

'They are a people,' said the Captain, nasally accentuating his words, 'who are to be brought to a knowledge of the Light; and, in proportion as the effort is dangerous, so should the worker glory in his task.'

He gazed at Helga, as though seeking her approval of this sentiment. But she was looking at me with an expression of anxiety in her blue eyes.

'I gather,' said I, with curiosity stimulated by thought of the girl's and my situation aboard this homely little barque, with her singular skipper and wild, dark crew—'I gather, Captain Bunting, from what has passed, that the blow you are now levelling at these fellows' superstitions—as you call them—is aimed at their diet?'

'Just so,' he answered. 'I am trying to compel them to eat pork. Who knows that before the equator be crossed I may not have excited a real love for pork among them? That would be a great work, sir. It will sap one of the most contemptible of their superstitions, and provide me with a little crevice for the insertion of the wedge of truth.'

'I believe pork,' said I, 'is not so much a question of religion as a question of health with these poor dark creatures, bred in hot latitudes.'

'Pork enters largely into their faith,' he answered.

'So far, you have not been very successful, I think?'

'No. You heard what Vanjoor Nakier said. The wasteful wretches have for the third time cast their allowance overboard. Only think, Miss Nielsen, of

wilfully throwing over the rail as much hearty excellent food—honest salt pork and very fair pea-soup—as would keep a poor family at home in dinners for a week!'

'What do they eat instead?' she asked.

'Why, on pork days, biscuit, I suppose. There is nothing else.'

'You give them beef every other day?' said I.

'Beef and duff,' he answered; 'but I shall stop that. Famine may help me in dealing with their superstitions.'

It was not for me, partaking, as Helga and I were, of this man's hospitality, using his ship, dependent upon him, indeed, for my speedy return home with Helga—it was not for me, I say, at this early time at all events, to remonstrate with him, to tell him that, exalted as he might consider his motives, they were urging him into a very barbarous, cruel behaviour; but, as I sat looking at him, my emotion, spite of his claims upon my kindness, was one of hearty disgust, with deeper feelings working in me besides, when I considered that, if our evil fortune forced us to remain for any length of time on board *The Light of the*

World, we might find his theory of conversion making his ship a theatre for as bad a tragedy as was ever enacted upon the high seas.

On a sudden he looked up at a little timepiece that was ticking against a beam just over his head.

'Have you any acquaintance with the sea, Mr. Tregarthen?' he asked.

'Merely a boating acquaintance,' I replied.

'Can you stand a watch?'

'I could keep a look-out,' said I, a little dismayed by these questions, 'but I am utterly ignorant of the handling of a ship.'

He looked reflectively at Helga, then at me, pulling down first one whisker, then the other, while his thick lips lay broad in a smile under his long hooked nose.

'Oh, well,' said he, 'Abraham Wise will do.' He went to the cuddy door and called 'Forward there!'

'Yaas, sah,' came a thick Africander-like note out of the forecastle obscurity.

'Ask Abraham Wise to step aft.'

He resumed his seat, and in a few minutes Abraham arrived. Helga instantly rose and gave

him her hand with a sweet cordial smile that was full of her gratification at the sight of him. For my part, it did my heart good to see him. After the tallowy countenance and odd talk of the Captain and the primrose complexions and scowling glances of his Malays, there was real refreshment to the spirits to be got out of the homely English face and English 'longshore garb of the boatman, with the man's suggestions, besides, of the English Channel and of home.

'And how is Jacob?' said I.

'Oh, he's a-feeling a little better, sir. A good bit down, of course, as we both are. 'Taint realizable even *now*.'

'Do you refer to the loss of your lugger?' said Captain Bunting.

'Ay, sir, to the *Airly Marn*,' answered Abraham, confronting him, and gazing at him with a steadfastness that slightly increased his squint.

'But surely, my good fellow,' cried the Captain, 'you had plenty of time, I hope, to feel thoroughly grateful for your preservation from the dreadful fate which lay before you had Providence suffered you to continue your voyage?'

'Oi dunno about dreadful fate,' answered Abraham: 'all I can say is, I should be blooming glad if that there *Airly Marn* was afloat again, or if so be as we'd never fallen in with this here *Light of the World.*'

'It is as I told you, you perceive,' exclaimed the Captain, smiling and addressing Helga and me in his blandest manner: 'as we descend the social scale, recognition of signal and providential mercies grows feebler and feebler, until it dies out—possibly before it gets down to Deal boatmen. I want a word with you, Abraham Wise. But first, how have you been treated forward?'

'Oh, werry well indeed, sir,' he answered. 'The mate showed us where to tarn in when the time comes round, and I dessay we'll manage to git along all right till we gets clear of ye.'

'What have you had to eat?'

'The mate gave us a little bit o' pork for to be biled, but ye've got a black cook forrads as seemed to Jacob and me to take the dressing of that there meat werry ill.'

The Captain seemed to motion the matter aside with his hand, and said:

'My vessel is without a second mate; I mean, a man qualified to take charge of the deck when Mr. Jones and I are below. Now, I am thinking that you would do very well for that post.'

'I'd rather go home, sir,' said Abraham.

'Ay,' said the Captain, complacently surveying him, 'but while you are with me, you know, you must be prepared to do your bit. I find happiness in assisting a suffering man. But,' added he nasally, 'in this world we must give and take. You eat my meat and sleep in what I think I may fairly term my bedroom. What pay do I exact? Simply the use of your eyes and limbs.'

He glanced with a very self-satisfied expression at Helga. It seemed, indeed, that most of his talk now was *at* her when not directly *to* her. She had come round to my side of the table after leaving Abraham, and giving her my chair, I stood listening, with my hand on the back of it.'

'I'm quite willing to tarn to,' said Abraham, 'while I'm along with ye, sir. I ain't afeared of work. I dorn't want no man's grub nor shelter for nothen.'

'Quite right,' said the Captain; 'those are respect-

able sentiments. Of course, if you accept my offer I will pay you, give you the wages that Winstanley had—four pounds a month for the round voyage.'

Abraham scratched the back of his head and looked at me. This proposal evidently put a new complexion upon the matter to his mind.

'You can handle a ship, I presume?' continued the Captain.

'Whoy, yes,' answered Abraham with a grin of wonder at the question: 'if I ain't been poiloting long enough to know that sort o' work, ye shall call me a Malay.'

'I should not require a knowledge of navigation in you,' said the Captain.

Abraham responded with a bob of the head, then scratching at his back hair afresh, said :

'I must ask leave to tarn the matter over. I should like to talk with my mate along o' this.'

'I'll put him on the articles, too, if he likes, at the current wages,' said the Captain. 'However, think over it. You can let me know to-morrow. But I shall expect you to take charge during the middle watch.'

'That I'll willingly dew, sir,' answered Abraham. 'But how about them Ceylon chaps and Malays forrads? Dew they understand sea tarms?'

'Perfectly well,' answered the Captain, 'or how should I and Mr. Jones get along, think you?'

'Well,' exclaimed Abraham: 'I han't had much to say to 'em as yet. One chap's been talking a good deal this evening, and I allow he's got a grievance, as most sailors has. There's some sort o' difficulty: I allow it lies in the eating; but a man wants practice to follow noicely what them there sort o' coloured covies has to say.'

'Well,' exclaimed the Captain, with another bland wave of the hand in dismissal of the subject, '*we* understand each other, at all events, my lad.'

He went to the locker from which he had extracted the biscuits, produced a bottle of rum, and filled a wine-glass.

'Neat or with water?' said he, smiling.

'I've pretty nigh had enough water for to-day, sir,' answered Abraham, grinning too, and looking very well pleased at this act of attention. 'Here's to you, sir, I'm sure, and wishing you a prosperous woyage.

Mr. Tregarthen, your health, sir, and yourn, miss, and may ye both soon get home and find everything comfortable and roight.' He drained the glass with a smack of his lips. 'As pretty a little drop o' rum as I've had this many a day,' said he.

'You can tell Jacob to lay aft presently,' said the Captain, 'when the steward is at liberty, and he will give him such another dose. That will do.'

Abraham knuckled his forehead, pausing to say to me in a hoarse whisper, which must have been perfectly audible to the Captain. 'A noice gemman, and no mistake.'

'I am going below,' said the Captain when he was gone, 'to see after your accommodation. Will you sit here,' addressing Helga, 'or will you go on deck for a few turns? I fear you will find the air chilly.'

'I will go on deck with you, Hugh,' answered Helga.

The Captain ran his eye over her.

'You are without luggage,' said he, 'and, alas! wanting in almost everything; but if you will allow me——' he broke off and went to his cabin, and before we could have found time to exchange a

whisper, returned with a very handsome, almost new, fur coat.

'Now, Miss Nielsen,' said he, 'you will allow me to wrap you in this.'

'Indeed my jacket will keep me warm,' she answered, with that same look of shrinking in her face I have before described.

'Nay, but wear it, Helga,' said I, anxious to meet the man, at all events, halfway in his kindness. 'It is a delightful coat—the very thing for the keen wind that is blowing on deck!'

Had I offered to put it on for her she would at once have consented, but I could observe the recoil in her from the garment stretched in the Captain's hands, with his pale fat face smiling betwixt his long whiskers over the top of it. On a sudden, however, she turned and suffered him to put the coat on her, which he did with great ostentation of anxiety and a vast deal of smiling, and, as I could not help perceiving, with a deal more of lingering over the act than there was the least occasion for.

'Wonderfully becoming, indeed!' he exclaimed; 'and now to see that your cabin is comfortable.'

He passed through the door, and we mounted the companion steps.

The night was so dark that there was very little of the vessel to be seen. Her dim spaces of canvas made a mere pale whistling shadow of her as they floated, waving and bowing, in dim heaps through the obscurity. There was a frequent glancing of white water to windward and a dampness as of spray in the wind, but the little barque tossed with dry decks over the brisk Atlantic heave, crushing the water off either bow into a dull light of seething, against which, when she stooped her head, the round of the forecastle showed like a segment of the shadow in a partial eclipse of the moon. The haze of the cabin-lamp lay about the skylight, and the figure of the mate appeared in and vanished past it with monotonous regularity as he paced the short poop. There was a haze of light, too, about the binnacle-stand, with a sort of elusive stealing into it of the outline of the man at the helm. Forward the vessel lay in blackness. It was blowing what sailors call a top-gallant breeze, with, perhaps, more weight in it even than that; but the squabness of this *Light of the World*

promised great stiffness, and, though the wind had drawn some point or so forward while we were at table, the barque rose as stiff to it as though she had been under reefed topsails.

'Will you take my arm, Helga?' said I.

'Let me first turn up the sleeves of this coat,' said she.

I helped her to do this; she then put her hand under my arm, and we started to walk the lee-side of the deck as briskly as the swing of the planks would suffer. Scarcely were we in motion when the mate came down to us from the weather-side.

'Beg pardon,' said he. 'Won't you and the lady walk to wind'ard?'

'Oh, we shall be in your way!' I answered. 'It is a cold wind.'

'It is, sir.'

'But it promises a fair night,' said I.

'I hope so,' he exclaimed. 'Dirty weather don't agree with dirty skins.'

He turned on his heel and resumed his post on the weather-side of the deck.

'Dirty skins mean Malays in that chief mate's nautical dictionary,' said I.

'Hugh, how thankful I shall be when we are transferred to another ship!'

'Ay, indeed! but surely this is better than the lugger?'

'No! I would rather be in the lugger.'

'How now?' cried I. 'We are very well treated here. Surely the Captain has been all hospitality. No warm-hearted host ashore could do more. Why, here is he now at this moment superintending the arrangement of our cabins below to ensure our comfort!'

'I do not like him at *all!*' said she, in a tone which her slightly Danish accent rendered emphatic.

'I do not like his treatment of the men,' said I; 'but he is kind to us.'

'There is an unwholesome mind in his flabby face!' she exclaimed.

I could not forbear a laugh at this strong language in the little creature.

'And then his religion!' she continued. 'Does a truly pious nature talk as he does? I can under-

stand professional religionists intruding their calling upon strangers ; but I have always found sincerity in matters of opinion modest and reserved—I mean among what you call laymen. What right has this man to force upon those poor fellows forward the food that they are forbidden by their faith to eat ?'

'Yes,' said I; 'that is a vile side of the man's nature, I must own ; vile to you and me and to the poor Malays, I mean. But, surely, there must be sincerity too, or why should he bother himself ?'

'It may be meanness,' said she : 'he wants to save his beef ; meanness and that love of tyrannizing which is oftener to be found among the captains of your nation, Hugh, than mine !'

'Your nation !' said I, laughing. 'I claim you for Great Britain by virtue of your English speech. No pure Dane could talk your mother's tongue as you do. Spite of what you say, though, I believe the man sincere. Would he, situated as he is—two white men to eleven yellow-skins (for we and the boatmen must count ourselves out of it)—would he, I say, dare venture to arouse the passions—the religious passions —of a set of men who hail from the most treacherous

community of people in the world, if he were not governed by some dream of converting them?—a fancy that were you to transplant it ashore, would be reckoned noble and of a Scriptural and martyr-like greatness.'

'That may be,' she answered; 'but he is going very wickedly to work, nevertheless, and it will not be his fault if those coloured sailors do not dangerously mutiny long before he shall have persuaded the most timid and doubting of them that pork is good to eat.'

'Yes,' said I gravely; for she spoke with a sort of impassioned seriousness that must have influenced me, even if I had not been of her mind. 'I, for one, should certainly fear the worst if he persists—and I don't doubt he *will* persist, if Abraham and the other boatman agree to remain with him; for then it will be four to eleven—desperate odds, indeed, though as an Englishman he is bound to underrate the formidableness of anything coloured. However,' said I, with a glance into the darkness over the side, 'do not doubt that we shall be transhipped long before any trouble happens. I shall endeavour to have a talk

with Abraham before he decides. What he and Jacob then do, they will do with their eyes open.'

As I spoke these words, the Captain came up the ladder and approached us.

'Ha! Miss Nielsen,' he cried, 'were not you wise to put on that warm coat? All is ready below; but still let me hope that you will change your mind and occupy Mr. Jones's berth.'

'Thank you; for the short time we shall remain in this ship the cabin you have been good enough to prepare will be all I require,' she answered.

He peered through the skylight to see the hour.

'Five minutes to eight,' he exclaimed. 'Mr. Jones!' The man crossed the deck. 'I have arranged,' said the Captain, 'with the Deal boatman Abraham Wise to take charge of the barque during the middle watch. It is an experiment, and I shall require to be up and down during those hours to make sure of him. Not that I distrust his capacities. Oh dear no! From the vicious slipping of cables, merely for sordid purposes of hovelling, to the noble art of navigating a ship in a hurricane amid the shoals of the Straits of Dover, your Deal boatman is the most expert of men.

But,' continued he, 'since I shall have to be up and down, as I have said, during the middle watch, I will ask you to keep charge of the deck till midnight.'

'Very good, sir,' said the mate, who appeared to me to have been on duty ever since the hour of our coming aboard. 'It will keep the round of the watches steady, sir. The port watch comes on duty at eight bells.'

'Excellent!' exclaimed the Captain. 'Thank you, Mr. Jones.'

The mate stalked aft.

'Mr. Tregarthen,' he added, 'I observe that you wear a sou'wester.'

'It is the headgear I wore when I put off in the lifeboat,' said I, 'and I am waiting to get home to exchange it.'

'No need, no need!' cried he; 'I have an excellent wideawake below—not, indeed, perfectly new, but a very serviceable clinging article for ocean use—which is entirely at your service.'

'You are all kindness!'

'Nay,' he exclaimed in a voice of devotion, 'I believe I know my duty. Shall we linger here, Miss

Nielsen, or would you prefer the shelter of the cabin? At half-past eight Punmeamootty will place some hot water, biscuit, and a little spirit upon the table. I fear I shall be at a loss to divert you.'

'Indeed not!' exclaimed Helga.

The unconscious irony of this response must have disconcerted a less self-complacent man.

'I have a few volumes of an edifying kind, and a draught-board. My resources for amusing you, I fear, are limited to those things.'

The sweep of the wind was bleaker than either of us had imagined, and, now that the Captain had joined us, the deck possessed no temptation. We followed him into the cabin, where Helga hastily removed the coat as though fearing the Captain would help her. His first act was to produce the wideawake he had spoken of. This was a very great convenience to me; the sou'wester lay hot and heavy upon my head, and the sense of its extreme unsightliness added not a little to the discomfort it caused me. He looked at my sea-boots and then at his feet, and, with his head on one side, exclaimed, in his most smiling manner, that he feared his shoes would prove too large for me,

but that I was very welcome to the use of a pair of his slippers. These also I gratefully accepted, and withdrew to Mr. Jones's berth to put them on, and the comfort of being thus shod, after days of the weight and unwieldiness of my sea-boots, it would be impossible to express.

'I think we shall be able to make ourselves happy yet,' said the Captain. 'Pray sit, Miss Nielsen. Do you smoke, Mr. Tregarthen?'

'I do, indeed,' I answered, 'whenever I can get the chance.'

He looked at Helga, who said to me: 'Pray smoke here, Hugh, if the Captain does not object. My father seldom had a pipe out of his mouth, and I was constantly in his cabin with him.'

'You are truly obliging,' said the Captain; and going to the locker in which he kept his rum, biscuits, and the like, he took out a cigar-box, and handed me as well-flavoured a Havannah as ever I had smoked in my life. All this kindness and hospitality was, indeed, overwhelming, and I returned some very lively thanks, to which he listened with a smile, afterwards, as his custom was, waving them aside with his

hand. He next entered his cabin and returned with some half-dozen books, which he put before Helga. I leaned over her shoulder to look at them, and speedily recognised 'The Whole Duty of Man,' 'The Pilgrim's Progress,' Young's 'Night Thoughts,' a volume by Jeremy Taylor; and the rest were of this sort of literature. Helga opened a volume and seemed to read. When I turned to ask the Captain a question about these books, I found him staring at her profile out of the corner of his eyes, while with his right hand he stroked his whisker meditatively.

'These are all very good books,' said I, 'particularly the "Pilgrim's Progress."'

'Yes,' he answered with a sigh; 'works of that kind during my long periods of loneliness upon the high seas are my only solace, and lonely I am. All ship-captains are more or less alone when engaged in their profession, but I am peculiarly so.'

'I should have thought the Church, Captain, would have suited you better than the sea,' said I.

'Not the Church,' he answered. 'I am a Non-conformist, and Dissent is stamped upon a long pedigree. Pray light up, Mr. Tregarthen.'

He took his seat at the head of the table, put a match to his cigar, the sight of which betwixt his thick lips considerably humanized him in my opinion, and, clasping his pale, gouty-looking hands upon the table, leaned forward, furtively eyeing Helga over the top of his cigar, which forked up out of his mouth like the bowsprit of a ship.

His conversation chiefly concerned himself, his past career, his antecedents, and so forth. He talked as one who wishes to stand well with his hearers. He spoke of a Lady Duckett as a connection of his on his mother's side, and I observed that he paused on pronouncing the name. He told us that his mother had come from a very ancient family that had been for centuries established in Cumberland, but he was reticent on the subject of his father. He talked much of his daughter's loneliness at home, and said he grieved that she was without a companion—someone who would be equally dear to them both ; and as he said this he lay back in his chair in a very amplitude of waistcoat, with his eyes fixed on the upper deck and his whole posture suggestive of pensive thought.

Well, thought I, this, to be sure, is a very strange sort of sea-captain. I had met various skippers in my day, but none like this man. Even a trifling expletive would have been refreshing in his mouth. From time to time Helga glanced at him, but with an air of aversion that was not to be concealed from me, however self-complacency might blind him to it. She suddenly exclaimed, with almost startling inconsequentiality :

'You will be greatly obliging us, Captain Bunting, by giving orders to Mr. Jones or to Abraham to keep a look-out for ships sailing north during the night. We can never tell what passing vessel might not be willing to receive Mr. Tregarthen and me.'

'What! In the darkness of night?' he exclaimed. 'How should we signal? How would you have me convey my desire to communicate?'

'By a blue light, or by burning a port-fire,' said Helga shortly.

'Ah, I see you are a thorough sailor—you are not to be instructed,' he cried, jocosely wagging his whiskers at her. 'Think of a young lady being acquainted with the secret of night communications

at sea! I fear — I fear we shall have to wait for the daylight. But what,' he exclaimed unctuously, 'is the reason of this exceeding desire to return home?'

'Oh, Captain,' said I, 'home is home.'

'And Mr. Tregarthen wishes to return to his mother,' said Helga.

'But, my dear young lady, *your* home is not in England, is it?' he asked.

She coloured, faltered, and then answered: 'My home is in Denmark.'

'You have lost your poor dear father,' said he, 'and I think I understood you to say, Mr. Tregarthen, that Miss Nielsen's poor dear mother fell asleep some years since.'

This was a guess on his part. I had no recollection whatever of having told him anything of the sort.

'I am an orphan,' exclaimed Helga, with a little hint of tears in her eyes, 'and—and, Captain Bunting, Mr. Tregarthen and I want to return home.'

'Captain Bunting will see to that, Helga,' said I, conceiving her somewhat too importunate in this direction.

She answered me with a singularly wistful, anxious look.

The conversation came to a pause through the entrance of Punmeamootty. He arrived with a tray and hot water, which he placed upon the table together with some glasses. The Captain produced wine and a bottle of rum. Helga would take nothing, though no one could have been more hospitably pressing than Captain Bunting. For my part, I was glad to fill my glass, as much for the sake of the tonic of the spirit as for the desire to appear entirely sociable with this strange skipper.

'You can go forward,' he exclaimed to the Malay; and the fellow went gliding on serpentine legs, as it veritably seemed to me, out through the door.

No further reference was made to the subject of our leaving the barque. The Captain was giving us his experiences of the Deal boatmen, and relating an instance of heroic roguery on the part of the crew of a galley-punt, when a noise of thick, throaty, African-like yowling was heard sounding from somewhere forward, accompanied by one or two calls from the mate overhead.

'I expect Mr. Jones is taking in the foretop-gallant sail,' said the Captain. 'Can it be necessary? I will return shortly.' And, giving Helga a convulsive bow, he pulled his wideawake to his ears and went on deck.

'You look at me, Hugh,' said Helga, fixing her artless, sweet, and modest eyes upon me, 'when I speak to Captain Bunting as though I do wrong.'

I answered gently, 'No. But is it not a little ungracious, Helga, to keep on expressing your anxiety to get away, in the face of all this hospitable treatment and kindly anxiety to make us comfortable and happy while we remain?'

She looked somewhat abashed. 'I wish he was not so kind,' she said.

'What is your misgiving?' said I, inclining towards her to catch a better view of her face.

'I fear he will not make haste to tranship us,' she answered.

'But why should he want to keep us?'

She glanced at me with an instant's surprise emphasized by a brief parting of her lips that was yet not a smile. She made no answer, however.

'He will not want to keep us,' continued I, talking with the confidence of a young man to a girl whom he is protecting, and whose behaviour assures him that she looks up to him and values his judgment. 'We may prove very good company for a day or two, but the master of a vessel of this sort is a man who counts his sixpences, and he has no idea of maintaining us for a longer time than he can possibly help, depend upon it.'

'I hope so,' she answered.

'But you don't think so,' said I, struck by her manner.

She answered by speaking of his treatment of his crew, and we were upon this subject when he descended the cabin ladder.

'A small freshening of the wind,' said he, 'and a trifling squall of rain.' There was no need for him to tell us this, for his long whiskers sparkled with water drops, and carried evidences of a brisk shower. 'The barque is now very snug, and there is nothing in sight,' said he, with a sort of half-humorous, reproachful significance in his way of turning to Helga.

She smiled, as though by smiling she believed I

should be pleased. The Captain begged her to drink a little wine and eat a biscuit, and she consented. This seemed to gratify him, and his behaviour visibly warmed while he relighted his cigar, mixed himself another little dose, and resumed his chat about Deal boatmen and his experiences in the Downs.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CREW OF MALAYS.

We sat chatting thus until something after nine. The comfort of this cabin after the lugger, the knowledge that Helga and I would each have a comfortable bed, comparatively speaking, to lie in, the conviction that our stay in the barque must be short, and that a very few hours might see us homeward bound, coupled with a sense of security such as never possessed me in the open lugger, not to mention the influence of my one pretty big tumbler of rum punch, had put me into a good humour.

'Is not this better than the lugger?' I said to Helga, as I motioned with my cigar round the cabin, and pointed to the slippers upon my feet. 'Think of my little windy bed under that boat's deck, Helga, and recollect your black forepeak.'

She seemed to acquiesce. The Captain's countenance was bland with gratification.

'You tell me you have not travelled, Mr. Tregarthen?' said he.

'I have not,' I replied.

'But you would like to see the world? All young men should see the world. Does not the poet tell us that home-keeping youths have ever homely wits?' and here he harangued me for a little with commonplaces on the advantage of travel; then, addressing Helga very smilingly, he said, '*You* have seen much of the world?'

'Not very much,' she answered.

'South America?'

'I was once at Rio,' she answered. 'I was also at Port Royal, in Jamaica, and have accompanied my father in short voyages to one or two Portuguese and Mediterranean ports.'

'Come, there is extensive observation, even in that,' said he, 'in one so—in one whose years are still few! Did you ever visit Table Bay?'

She answered 'No.'

He smoked meditatively.

'Helga,' said I, 'you look tired. Would you like to go to your cabin?'

'I should, Hugh.'

'Well, I shall be glad to turn in myself, Captain. Will you forgive our early retreat?'

'By all means,' he exclaimed. 'Let me show you the cabins.'

He went to the cuddy door and bawled for Punmeamootty. 'Light a lantern,' I heard him say, 'and bring it aft!'

After a minute or two the steward made his appearance with a lantern swinging in his hand. The Captain took it from him, and we passed out on to the quarter-deck where the hatch lay. After the warmth of the cuddy interior, the wind, chilled as it had been with the damp of the squall, seemed to blow with an edge of frost. The rays of the lantern danced in the blackness of the wet planks. The vessel was rolling slowly and plunging heavily, and there were many heavy, complaining, straining noises aloft amid the invisible spaces of canvas swinging through the starless gloom. The cold, bleak roar of seething waters alongside recalled the raft, and there

was a sort of sobbing all along the dusk close under either line of bulwarks.

'Let me help you through this little hatch, Miss Nielsen,' said the Captain, dangling the lantern over it that we might see the aperture.

If she answered him, I did not hear her; she peered a moment, then put her foot over and vanished. The steps were perpendicular—pieces of wood nailed to the bulkhead—yet she had descended this up-and-down ladder in an instant, and almost as she vanished was calling to me from below to say that she was safe.

'What extraordinary nimbleness in a young lady!' cried the Captain, in a voice of unaffected admiration. 'What an exquisite sailor! Now, Mr. Tregarthen!'

I shuffled down, keeping a tight hold on the edge of the hatch, and felt my feet before there was occasion to let go with my hands. There was very little to be seen of this interior by the lantern light. It was the forepart of the steerage, so far as I could gather, with two rows of bulkheads forming a little corridor, at the extremity of which, aft, I could faintly

distinguish the glimmering outlines of cases of light cargo. Forward of the hatch, through which we had descended, there stood a solid bulkhead, so there was nothing to be seen that way. The doors of the cabins opened out of the little corridor ; they were mere pigeon-holes ; but then these 'tweendecks were very low, and while I stood erect I felt the crown of the wideawake I wore brushing the planks.

Never could I have imagined so much noise in a ship as was here—the squeaking, the grinding, the groaning ; the jar and shock of the rudder upon its post ; the thump of the seas outside, and the responsive throbbing within ; the sullen, muffled roar of the Atlantic surge washing past ; all these notes were blended into such a confusion of sounds as is not to be expressed. The lantern swayed in the Captain's hand, and the shadows at our feet sprang from side to side. There were shadows, too, all round about, wildly playing upon the walls and bulkheads of the vessel with a mopping and mowing of them that might have filled a lonely and unaccustomed soul down here with horrible imaginations of sea monsters and ocean spectres.

'I heartily wish, Miss Nielsen,' cried the Captain—and, in truth, he had need to exert his voice to be audible amid that bewildering clamour—'that you had suffered me to provide you with better accommodation than this. Jones could have done very well down here. However, for to-night this will be your cabin. To-morrow I hope you will change your mind, and consent to sleep above.'

So saying, he opened the foremost of the little doors on the port side. It was a mere hole indeed, yet it somehow took the civilized look of an ordinary ship's berth from the round scuttle or thickly-glazed porthole which lay in an embrasure deep enough to comfortably warrant the thickness of the vessel's side. Under this porthole was a narrow bunk, and in it a bolster, and, as I might suppose, blankets, over which was spread a very handsome rug. I swiftly took note of one or two conveniences—a looking-glass, a washstand secured to the bulkhead (this piece of furniture, I made no doubt, had come direct from the Captain's cabin); there was also a little table, and upon it a comb and brush, and on the cabin deck was a square of carpet.

'Very poor quarters for you, Miss Nielsen,' said the Captain, looking round, his nose and whiskers appearing twice as long in the fluctuations of the lantern light and his fixed smile odd beyond words, with the tumbling of the shadows over his face.

'The cabin is very comfortable, and you are very kind!' exclaimed Helga.

'You are good to say so. I wish you a good night and pleasant dreams.'

He extended his hand, and held hers, I thought, rather longer than mere courtesy demanded.

'That will be your cabin, Mr. Tregarthen,' said he, going to the door.

I bade Helga good-night. It was hard to interpret her looks by that light, yet I fancied she had something to say, and bent my ear to her mouth; but instead of speaking, she hurriedly passed her right hand down my sleeve, by no means caressingly, but as though she desired to cleanse or dry her fingers. I looked at her, and she turned away.

'Good-night, Helga!' said I.

'Good-night, Hugh!' she answered.

'You will find a bolt to your door, Miss Nielsen,'

called the Captain. 'Oh, by the way,' he added, 'I do not mean that you shall undress in the dark. There is an opening over your door; I will hang the lantern amidships here. It will shed light enough to see by, and in half an hour, if that will not be too soon, Punmeamootty will remove it. Good-night, Mr. Tregarthen!'

He left me, after hanging up the lantern by a hook fixed in a beam amidships of the corridor. I waited until his figure had disappeared up the steps of the hatch and then called to Helga. She heard me instantly, and cried, 'What is it, Hugh?'

'Did not you want to say something to me just now?' I exclaimed.

She opened the door and repeated, 'What is it, Hugh? I cannot hear you!'

'I thought you wished to speak to me just now,' said I, 'but were hindered by the Captain's presence.'

'No, I have nothing to say,' she answered, looking very pale in the frolic of shadows made by the swinging lantern.

'Why did you stroke down my arm? Was it a rebuke? Have I offended you?'

'Oh, Hugh!' she cried; then exclaimed: 'Could not you see what I meant? I acted what I could not speak.'

'I do not understand,' said I.

'I wished to wipe off the grasp of that man's hand,' she exclaimed.

'Poor wretch! Is he so soiling as all that, Helga? And yet how considerate he is! I believe he has half denuded his own cabin for you.'

'Well, good-night once more,' said she, and closed the door of her berth upon herself.

I entered my cabin wondering like a fool. I could witness nothing but groundless aversion in her thoughts of this Captain Bunting, and felt vexed by her behaviour; for first I considered that, as in the lugger, so here—some days, ay, and even some weeks, might pass without providing us with the chance of being conveyed on board a homeward-bound ship. I do not say I believed this; but it was a probable thing, and there was that degree of risk, therefore, in it. Then I reflected that it was in the power of Captain Bunting to render our stay in his vessel either as agreeable as he had the power to make it,

or entirely uncomfortable and wretched by neglect, insolence, bad-humour, and the like. I therefore regarded Helga's behaviour as impolitic, and, not having the sense to see into it so as to arrive at a reason, I allowed it to tease me as a piece of silly girlish caprice.

This was in my mind as I entered my cabin. There was light enough to enable me to master the interior, and a glance around satisfied me that I was not to be so well used as Helga. There were a pair of blankets in the bunk, and an old pewter basin on the deck that was sliding to and fro with the motions of the vessel. This I ended by throwing the concern into the next cabin, which, so far as I could tell, was half full of bolts of canvas and odds and ends of gear, which emitted a very strong smell of tar. However, I was sleepier than I was sensible of while I used my legs, for I had no sooner stretched my length in the bunk, using the Captain's slippers rolled up in my monkey-jacket as a pillow, than I fell asleep, though five minutes before I should have believed that there was nothing in opium to induce slumber in the face of the complicated noise which filled that interior.

I slept heavily right through the night, and awoke at half-past seven. I saw Punmeamootty standing in the door, and believe I should not have awakened but for his being there and staring at me. I lay a minute before I could bring my mind to its bearings; and I have some recollection of stupidly and drowsily imagining that I had been set ashore on an island by Captain Bunting, that I had taken refuge in a cave, and that the owner of that cave, a yellow wild man, had looked in, and, finding me there, was meditating how best to despatch me.

'Hallo?' said I. 'What is it?'

'You wantchee water, sah?' said the man.

'Yes,' said I, now in possession of all my wits. 'You will find the basin belonging to this berth next door. A little cold water, if you please, and, if you can possibly manage it, Punmeamootty, a small bit of soap and a towel.'

He withdrew, and in a few minutes returned with the articles I required.

'How is the weather?' said I, with a glance at the screwed-up porthole, the glass of which lay as dusky

with grime as the scuttle of a whaler that has been three years a-fishing.

'Very proper wedder, sah,' he answered.

'Captain Bunting up?'

'No, sah.'

'You will be glad to get to Cape Town, I dare say,' said I, scrubbing at my face, and willing to talk since I noticed a disposition in the fellow to linger. 'Do you hail from that settlement, Punmeamootty?'

'No, sah: I 'long to Ceylon,' he answered.

'How many Cingalese are there aboard?'

'Tree,' he answered.

'Do the rest belong to the Cape?'

He shook his head and replied, 'No; one Burmah man, anoder Penang, anoder Singapore—allee like that.'

'But your work in this ship ends at Cape Town?'

'Yes, sah,' he answered, swiftly and fiercely.

'Are you all Mahometans?'

'Yes, allee Mussulmans.'

I understood by *allee* that he meant all. He fastened his dusky eyes upon me with an expression of expectation that I would pursue the subject:

finding me silent, he looked behind him, and then said, in a species of English that was not 'pigeon' and that I can but feebly reproduce, though, to be sure, what was most remarkable in it came from the colour it took through his intonation, and that glitter in his eyes which had made them visible to me in the dusk of the previous evening, 'You have been wrecked, sah?' I nodded. 'But you sabbee nabigation?'

I could not restrain a laugh. 'I know nothing of navigation,' said I; 'but I was not wrecked for the want of it, Punmeamootty.'

'But de beautiful young lady, she sabbee nabigation?' said he, with an apologetic, conciliatory grin that laid bare a wide range of his gleaming white teeth.

'How do you know that?' said I, struck by the question.

'Me hear you tell de captain, sah.'

'Yes,' said I, 'I believe she can navigate a ship.' He tossed his hands and rolled up his eyes in ludicrous imitation, as I thought, of his Captain's behaviour when he desired to express admiration. 'She beautiful young lady,' he exclaimed, 'and werry

good—kind smile, and berry sorry for poor Mussulmans, sah.'

'I know what you mean, Punmeamootty,' said I. 'We are both very sorry, believe me! The Captain means well'—the man's teeth met in a sudden snap as I said this—'the man means well,' I repeated, eyeing him steadily; 'but it is a mistaken kindness. The lady and I will endeavour to influence him; though, at the same time, we trust to be out of the ship very soon, possibly too soon to be of any use. Anything in sight?'

'No, sah!'

He loitered still, as though he had more to say. Finding me silent, he made an odd sort of obeisance and disappeared.

Helga's cabin-door was shut. I listened, but could not collect amid the creaking noises that she was stirring within. It was likely she had passed an uneasy night and was now sleeping, and in that belief I gained the hatchway and mounted on deck.

The first person I saw was Helga. She was talking to the two boatmen at the foot of the little poop ladder, under the lee of the bulwarks, which were very

nearly the height of a man. The decks were still dark with the swabbing-up of the brine with which they had been scoured. The galley chimney was hospitably smoking. A group of the coloured seamen lounged to leeward of the galley, with steaming pannikins and biscuits in their hands, and, as they ate and drank, they talked incessantly. The fellow named Nakier stood on the forecastle with his arms folded, persistently staring aft, as it seemed to me, at Helga and the boatmen. The sun was about half an hour above the horizon; the sky was very delicately shaded with a frosty network of cloud, full of choice and tender tints, as though the sun were a prism flooding the heavens with many-coloured radiance. Over the lee-rail the sea was running in a fine rich blue streaked with foam, and the wind was a moderate breeze from which the completely clothed masts of the barque were leaning with the yards braced forward, for, so far as I could tell by the sun, the wind was about south-east.

All these details my eye took in as I stepped out of the hatch. Helga advanced to meet me, and I held her hand.

'You are looking very bonny this morning,' said I. 'Your sleep has done you good. Good-morning, Abraham; and how are you, Jacob? You two are the men I just now want to see.'

'Marning, Mr. Tregarthen,' exclaimed Abraham. 'How are *you*, sir? Don't Miss Nielsen look first-rate? Why, she ain't the same lady she was when we first fell in with ye.'

'It is true, Helga,' said I. 'Did Captain Bunting smuggle some cosmetics into your cabin, along with his washstand?'

'Oh, do not joke, Hugh,' said she. 'Look around the ocean: it is still bare.'

'I've bin a-telling Miss Nielsen,' exclaimed Abraham, 'that them coloured chaps forrads are a-talking about her as if she were a diwinity.'

'A angel,' said Jacob.

'A diwinity,' said Abraham, looking at his mate. 'The cove they calls boss—that there Nakier yonder, him as is a-looking at us as if his heart was a-going to bust—what d'ye think he says—ay, and in fust-class English, too? "That there gal," says he, "ain't no Englishwoman. I'm glad to know it. She's got too

sweet a hoye for an Englishwoman." "What d'ye know about hoyes?" says I. "English bad, bad," says he; "some good," here he holds up his thumb as if a-counting wan; "but many veree bad, veree bad," he says, says he, and here he holds up his fower fingers, like a little sprouting of o'er-ripe plantains, meaning fower to one, I allow.'

'It's pork as is at the bottom o' them feelin's,' said Jacob.

'Abraham,' said I, in a low voice, for I had no desire to be overheard by the mate, who came and went at the rim of the poop overhead in his walk from the taffrail to the break of the deck, 'before you accept Captain Bunting's offer——'

'I *have* accepted it, Mr. Tregarthen,' he interrupted.

'When?'

'Last noight, or call it this marning. He was up and down while I kep' a look-out, and wanst he says to me, "Are you agreeable, Vise?" says he; and I says, "Yes, sir," having talked the matter o'er with Jacob.'

'I hope the pair of you have thought the offer

well out,' said I, with a glance at the Captain's cabin, from which, however, we stood too far to be audible to him in it. 'I saw Nakier haranguing you yesterday afternoon, and, though you told me you didn't quite understand him, yet surely by this time you will have seen enough to make you guess that if the Captain insists on forcing pork down those men's throats his ship is not going to continue a floating Garden of Eden!'

'Whoy, that may be roight enough,' answered Abraham; 'but them coloured chaps' grievances han't got nothen to do with Jacob an' me. What I considered is this: here am I offered fower pound a month, and there's Jacob, who's to go upon the articles for three pound; that'll be seven pound 'twixt us tew men. Ain't that money good enough for the likes of us, Mr. Tregarthen? Where's the *Airly Marn?* Where's my fifteen pound vorth o' property? Where's Jacob's height pound vorth—ay, every farden of height pound?' he exclaimed, looking at Jacob, who confirmed his assurance with a prodigious nod. 'As to them leather-coloured covies——' he continued, with a contemptuous look forwards; then pausing, he cried

out, ''Soides, whoy *shouldn't* they eat pork? If it's good enough for me and Jacob, ain't it good enough for the likes o' such a poor little parcel o' sickly flesh as that there Nakier and his mates?'

'It is a question of religion with them,' said I.

'Religion!' grumbled Jacob. 'Religion, Mr. Tregarthen, don't lie here, sir,' putting his hand upon his waistcoat, 'but here,' pointing with a tarry-looking finger to where he imagined his heart was. 'There hain't no religion in dishes. I've heerd of chaps a-preaching in tubs, but I never heerd of religion lying pickled in a cask. Don't you let them chaps gammon you, sir. 'Tain't pork: it's a detarmination to find fault.'

'But have they not said enough in your hearing to persuade you they are in earnest?' said Helga.

'Why, ye see, lady,' answered Abraham, 'that their language is a sort o' conversation which there's ne'er a man along Deal beach as has ever been eddicated in, howe'er it may be along o' your part o' the coast, Mr. Tregarthen. What they says among themselves I don't onderstand.'

'But have they not complained to you,' persisted

Helga gently, 'of being obliged by the Captain either to go without food every other day or to eat meat that is forbidden to them by their religion?'

'That there Nakier,' replied Abraham, 'spun a long yarn yesterday to Jacob and me whilst we lay agin the galley feeling werry ordinary — werry ordinary indeed—arter that there bad job of the *Airly Marn;* but he talked so fast, and so soft tew, that all that I could tell ye of his yarn, miss, is that he and his mates don't fancy themselves as comfortable as they might be.'

I said quietly, for Mr. Jones had come to a halt at the rail above us: 'Well, Abraham, my advice to you both is, look about you a little while longer before you allow your names to be put upon the articles of this ship.'

At that moment the Captain came out of the door of the cuddy, and the two boatmen, with a flourish of their hands to Helga, went rolling forward. He came up to us, all smiles and politeness. It was easy to see that he had taken some trouble in dressing himself; his whiskers were carefully brushed; he wore a new purple-satin scarf; his ample black waistcoat hinted

that it belonged to his Sunday suit, or 'best things,' as servants call it; his boots were well polished; he showed an abundance of white cuff; and his wide-awake sat somewhat jauntily upon his head. His two or three chins went rolling and disappearing like a ground swell betwixt the opening of a pair of tall starched collars—an unusual embellishment, I should have imagined at sea, where starch is as scarce as newspapers. He hoped Helga had slept well; he trusted that the noises of straining and creaking below had not disturbed her. She must really change her mind, and occupy Mr. Jones's cabin. After shaking me by the hand, he seemed to forget that I stood by, so busy was he in his attention to Helga. He asked her to step on to the poop or upper deck.

'These planks are not yet dry,' said he; 'and besides,' he went on smiling always, 'your proper place, my dear young lady, is aft, where there is, at all events, seclusion, though, alas! I am unable to offer you the elegances and luxuries of an ocean mail steamer.'

We mounted the ladder, and he came to a stand to survey the sea.

'What a mighty waste, is it not, Miss Nielsen? Nothing in sight. All hopelessly sterile. But it is not for me to complain,' he added significantly.

He then called to Mr. Jones, and all very blandly, with the gentlemanly airs and graces which one associates with the counter, he asked him how the weather had been since eight bells, if any vessels had been sighted, and so forth, talking with a marked reference to Helga being near and listening to him.

Mr. Jones, with his purple pimple of a nose of the shape of a woman's thimble standing out from the middle of his pale face, with a small but extraordinary light-blue eye twinkling on either side of it under straw-coloured lashes and eyebrows resembling oakum, listened to and addressed the Captain with the utmost degree of respect. There was an air of shabbiness and of hard usage about his apparel that bespoke him a man whose locker was not likely to be overburthened with shot. His walk was something of a shamble, that was heightened by the loose pair of old carpet slippers he wore, and by the frayed heels of his breeches. His age was probably thirty.

He impressed me as a man whose appearance would tell against him among owners and shipmasters, who would therefore obtain a berth with difficulty, but who when once in possession would hold on tight by all possible strenuous effort of fawning, of agreeing, of submissively undertaking more work than a captain had a right to put him to.

While we thus stood I sent a look around the little *Light of the World* to see what sort of a ship we were aboard of, for down to this time I had scarcely had an opportunity of inspecting her. She was an old vessel, probably forty years old. This I might have guessed from the existence of the cabins in the steerage; but her beam and the roundness of her bows and a universal worn air, that answered to the wrinkles upon the human countenance, likewise spoke her age very plainly. Her fittings were of the homeliest: there was no brasswork here to glitter upon the eye; her deck furniture was, indeed, as coarse and plain as a smack's, with scars about the skylight, about the companion hatch-cover, about the drumhead of the little quarter-deck capstan, and about the line of the poop and bulwark rail, as though they had been used

over and over again by generations of seamen for cutting up plug tobacco upon. She had a very short forecastle-deck forward, under which you saw the heel of the bowsprit and the heaped mass of windlass; but the men's sleeping quarters were in the deck beneath, to which access was to be had only by what is commonly called a fore-scuttle—that is to say, a little hatch with a cover to it, which could be bolted and padlocked at will. Abaft the galley lay the long-boat, a squab tub of a fabric like the mother whose daughter she was. It rested in chocks, on its keel, and was lashed to bolts in the deck. There were some spare booms secured on top of it, but the boat's one use now was as a receptacle for poultry for the Captain's table. On either side of the poop hung a quarter-boat in davits—plain structures, sharp-ended like whaling-boats. Add a few details, such as a scuttle-butt for holding fresh water for the crew to drink from; a harness-cask against the cuddy-front, for storing the salted meats for current use; the square of the main-hatch tarpaulined and battened down; and then the yards mounting the masts and rising from courses to royals, spars and gear looking

as old as the rest of the ship, though the sails seemed new, and shone very white as the wind swelled their breasts to the sun, and you have as good a picture as I can put before you of this *Light of the World* that was bearing Helga and me hour by hour farther and deeper into the heart of the great Atlantic, and that was also to be the theatre of one of the strangest and wildest of the events which furnished forth this trying and desperate passage of my life.

Captain Bunting moved away with an invitation in his manner to Helga to walk. I lingered to exchange a word with the mate from the mere desire to be civil. Helga called me with her eyes to accompany her, then, hearing me speak to Mr. Jones, she joined the Captain and paced by his side. I spied him making an angle of his arm for her to take, but she looked away, and he let fall his hand.

'If Abraham Wise,' said I, 'agrees to sail with you, Mr. Jones, you will have a very likely lively fellow to relieve you in keeping watch.'

'Yes; he seems a good man. It is a treat to see a white face knocking about this vessel's deck,' he answered in a spiritless way, as though he found

little to interest him when his Captain's back was turned.

'You certainly have a very odd-looking crew,' said I. 'I believe I should not have the courage to send myself adrift along with one white man only aboard a craft full of Malays.'

'There were three of us,' he answered, 'but Winstanley disappeared shortly after we had sailed.'

As he spoke, Nakier, on the forecastle, struck a little silver-toned bell eight times, signifying eight o'clock.

'Who is that copper-coloured, scowling-looking fellow at the wheel?' I asked, indicating the man who had been at the helm when Helga and I came aboard on the preceding day.

'His name is Ong Kew Ho,' he answered. 'A rare beauty, ain't he?' he added, with a little life coming into his eyes. 'His face looks rotten with ripeness. Sorry to say he's in my watch, and he's the one of them all that I never feel very easy with of a dark night when he's where he is now and I'm alone here.'

'But the looks of those Asiatic folk don't always express their minds,' said I. 'I remember boarding

a ship off the town I belong to and noticing among the crew the most hideous, savage-looking creature it would be possible to imagine: eyes asquint, a flat nose with nostrils going to either cheek, black hair wriggling past his ears like snakes, and a mouth like a terrible wound; indeed, he is not to be described; yet the captain assured me that he was the gentlest, best-behaved man he had ever had under him, and the one favourite of the crew.'

'He wasn't a Malay,' said Mr. Jones drily.

'The captain didn't know his country,' said I.

Here Abraham arrived to take charge of the deck. He had polished himself up to the best of his ability, and mounted the ladder with an air of importance He took a slow, merchant-sailor-like, deep-sea survey of the horizon, following on with an equally deliberate gaze aloft at the canvas, then knuckled his brow to Mr. Jones, who gave him the course and exchanged a few words with him, and immediately after left the deck, howling out an irrepressible yawn as he descended the ladder.

It was not for me to engage Abraham in conversation. He was now on duty, and I understood the

sea-discipline well enough to know that he must be left alone. I thereupon joined Helga and Captain Bunting, not a little amused secretly by the quarter-deck strut the worthy boatman put on, by the knowing, consequential expression in his eyes as they met in a squint in the compass-bowl, by his slow look at the sea over the taffrail and the twist in his pursed-up lips as he went rolling forwards to the break of the poop, viewing the sails as though anxious to find something wrong, that he might give an order and prove his zeal.

At half-past eight Punmeamootty rang a little bell in the cabin, and we went down to breakfast. The repast, it was to be easily seen, was the best the ship's larder could furnish, and in excess of what was commonly placed upon the table. There was a good ham, there was a piece of ship's corned beef, and I recollect a jar of marmalade, some white biscuit, and a pot of hot coffee. The coloured steward waited nimbly, with a singular swiftness and eagerness of manner when attending to Helga, at whom I would catch him furtively gazing askant, with an expression in his fiery, dusky eyes that was more of wonder and

respect, I thought, than of admiration. At times he would send a sideways look at the Captain that put the fancy of a flourished knife into one's head, so keen and sudden and gleaming was it. Mr. Jones had apparently breakfasted and withdrawn to his cabin, thankful, no doubt, for a chance to stretch his legs upon a mattress.

In the course of the meal Helga inquired the situation of the ship.

'We are, as nearly as possible,' answered the Captain, 'on the latitude of the island of Madeira, and, roundly speaking, some hundred and twenty miles to the eastward of it. But you know how to take an observation of the sun, Mr. Tregarthen informed me. I have a spare sextant, and at noon you and I will together find out the latitude. I should very well like to have my reckoning confirmed by you;' and he leaned towards her, and smiled and looked at her.

She coloured, and said that, though her father had taught her navigation, her calculations could not be depended upon. But for her wish to please me, I believe she would not have troubled herself to give

him that answer, but coldly proceeded with the question she now put:

'Since we are so close to Madeira, Captain Bunting, would it be inconveniencing you to sail your barque to that island, where we are sure to find a steamer to carry us home?'

He softly shook his head with an expression of bland concern, while he sentimentally lifted his eyes to the tell-tale compass above his head.

'You ask too much, Helga,' said I. 'You must know that the deviation of a ship from her course may vitiate her policy of insurance, should disaster follow.'

'Just so!' exclaimed the Captain, with a thankful and smiling inclination of his head at me.

'Besides, Helga,' said I gently, 'supposing, on our arrival at Madeira, we should find no steamer going to England for some days, what should we do? There are no houses of charity in that island of Portuguese beggars, I fear; and Captain Bunting may readily guess how it happens that I left my purse at home.'

'Just so!' he repeated, giving me such another nod as he had before bestowed.

The subject dropped. The Captain made some remark about the part of the ocean we were in being abundantly navigated by homeward-bound craft, then talked of other matters; but whatever he said, though directly addressed to me, seemed to my ear to be spoken for the girl, as though, indeed, were she absent, he would talk little or in another strain.

CHAPTER IX.

BUNTING'S FORECASTLE FARE.

WHEN breakfast was ended, Helga left the table, to go to her cabin. Punmeamootty began to clear away the things.

'You can go forward,' said the Captain. 'I will call you when I want you.' I was about to rise. 'A minute, Mr. Tregarthen,' he exclaimed. He lay back in his chair, stroking first one whisker and then the other, with his eyes thoughtfully surveying the upper deck, at which he smiled as though elated by some fine happy fancies. He hung in the wind in this posture for a little while, then inclined himself with a confidential air towards me, clasping his fat fingers upon the table.

'Miss Nielsen,' said he softly, 'is an exceedingly attractive young lady.'

'She is a good brave girl,' said I, 'and pretty, too.'

'She calls you Hugh, and you call her Helga—Helga! a very noble, stirring name—quite like the blast of a trumpet, with something Biblical about it, too, though I do not know that it occurs in Holy Writ. Pray forgive me. This familiar interchange of names suggests that there may be more between you than exactly meets the eye, as the poet observes.'

'No!' I answered with a laugh that was made short by surprise. 'If you mean to ask whether we are sweethearts, my answer is—No. We met for the first time on the twenty-first of this month, and since then our experiences have been of a sort to forbid any kind of emotion short of a profound desire to get home.'

'Home!' said he. 'But her home is in Denmark?'

'Her father, as he lay dying, asked me to take charge of her, and see her safe to Kolding, where I believe she has friends,' I answered, not choosing to hint at the little half-matured programme for her that was in my mind.

'She is an orphan,' said he; 'but she has friends, you say?'

'I believe so,' I answered, scarcely yet able to guess at the man's meaning.

'You have known her since the twenty-first,' he exclaimed: 'to-day is the thirty-first—just ten days. Well, in that time a shrewd young gentleman like you will have observed much of her character. I may take it, said he, peering as closely into my face as our respective positions at the table would suffer, 'that you consider her a thoroughly religious young woman?'

'Why, yes, I should think so,' I answered, not suffering my astonishment to hinder me from being as civil and conciliatory as possible to this man, who, in a sense, was our deliverer, and who, as our host, was treating us with great kindness and courtesy.

'I will not,' said he, 'inquire her disposition. She impresses me as a very sweet young person. Her manners are genteel. She talks with an educated accent, and I should say her lamented father did not stint his purse in training her.'

I looked at him, merely wondering what he would say next.

'It is, at all events, satisfactory to know,' said he, lying back in his chair again, 'that there is nothing

between you—outside, I mean, the friendship which the very peculiar circumstances under which you met would naturally excite.' He lay silent awhile, smiling. 'May I take it,' said he, 'that she has been left penniless?'

'I fear it is so,' I replied.

He meditated afresh.

'Do you think,' said he, 'you could induce her to accompany you in my ship to the Cape?'

'No!' cried I, starting, 'I could not induce her, indeed, and for a very good reason: I could not induce myself.'

'But why?' he exclaimed in his oiliest tone. 'Why decline to see the great world, the wonders of this noble fabric of universe, when the opportunity comes to you? You shall be my guests; in short, Mr. Tregarthen, the round voyage shan't cost you a penny!'

'You are very good!' I exclaimed, 'but I have left my mother alone at home. I am her only child, and she is a widow, and my desire is to return quickly, that she may be spared unnecessary anxiety and grief.'

'A very proper and natural sentiment, pleasingly

expressed,' said he; 'yet I do not quite gather how your desire to return to your mother concerns Helga —I should say, Miss Nielsen!'

I believe he would have paused at 'Helga,' and not have added 'Miss Nielsen,' but for the look he saw in my face. Yet, stirred as my temper was by this half-hearted stroke of impertinent familiarity in the man, I took care that there should be no further betrayal of my feelings than what might be visible in my looks.

'Miss Nielsen wishes to return with me to my mother's house,' said I quietly; 'you were good enough to assure us that there should be no delay.'

'You only arrived yesterday!' he exclaimed, 'and down to this moment we have sighted nothing. But why do you suppose,' added he, 'that Miss Nielsen is not to be tempted into making the round voyage with me in this barque?'

'She must speak for herself,' said I, still perfectly cool, and no longer in doubt as to how the land lay with this gentleman.

'You have no claim upon her, Mr. Tregarthen?' said he, with one of his blandest smiles.

'No claim whatever,' said I, 'outside the obligation imposed upon me by her dying father. I am her protector by his request, until I land her safely among her friends in Denmark.'

'Just so,' said he; 'but it might happen—it might just possibly happen,' he continued, letting his head fall on one side and stroking his whiskers, 'that circumstances may arise to render her return to Denmark under your protection unnecessary.'

I looked at him, feigning not to understand.

'Now, Mr. Tregarthen, see here,' said he, and his blandness yielded for an instant to the habitual professional peremptoriness of the shipmaster; 'I am extremely desirous of making Miss Nielsen's better acquaintance, and I am also much in earnest in wishing that she should get to know my character very well. This cannot be done in a few hours, nor, indeed, in a few days. You will immensely oblige me by coaxing the young lady to remain in this vessel. There is nothing between you. . . . Just so. She is an orphan, and there is reason to fear, from what you tell me, comparatively speaking, friendless. We must all of us desire the prosperity of so sweet and

amiable a female. It may happen,' he exclaimed, with a singularly deep smile, 'that before many days have passed, she will consent to bid you farewell and to continue the voyage alone with me.'

I opened my eyes at him, but said nothing.

'A few days more or less of absence from your home,' he continued, 'cannot greatly signify to you. We have a right to hope, seeing how virtuously, honourably, and heroically you have behaved, that Providence is taking that care of your dear mother which, let us not doubt, you punctually, morning and night, offer up your prayers for. But a few days may make a vast difference in Miss Nielsen's future ; and, having regard to the solemn obligation her dying father imposed upon you, it should be a point of duty with you, Mr. Tregarthen, to advance her interests, however inconvenienced you may be by doing so.'

Happily, his long-windedness gave me leisure to think. I could have answered him hotly ; I could have given him the truth very nakedly; I could have told him that his words were making me understand there was more in my heart for Helga than I had been at all conscious of twenty minutes before. But

every instinct in me cried, Beware! to the troop of emotions hurrying through my mind, and I continued to eye him coolly and to speak with a well-simulated carelessness.

'I presume, Captain Bunting,' said I, 'that if Miss Nielsen persists in her wish to leave your ship you will not hinder her?'

'That will be the wish I desire to extinguish,' said he; 'I believe it may be done.'

'You will please remember,' said I, 'that Miss Nielsen is totally unequipped even for a week or two of travel by sea, let alone a round voyage that must run into months.'

'I understand you,' he answered, motioning with his hand; 'but the difficulty is easily met. The Canary Islands are not far off. Santa Cruz will supply all her requirements. My purse is wholly at her service. And with regard to yourself, Mr. Tregarthen, I should be happy to advance you any sum in moderation, to enable you to satisfy your few wants.'

'You are very good,' said I; 'but I am afraid we shall have to get you to tranship us at the first opportunity.'

A shadow of temper, that was not a frown, and therefore I do not know well how to convey it, penetrated his smile.

'You will think over it,' said he. 'Time does not press. Yet we shall not find another port so convenient as Santa Cruz.'

As he pronounced these words Helga entered the cuddy. He instantly rose, bowing to her and smiling, but said no more than that he hoped shortly to join us on deck. He then entered his berth.

Helga approached me close, and studied my face for a moment or two in silence with her soft eyes.

'What is the matter, Hugh?' she asked.

I looked at her anxiously and earnestly, not knowing as yet how to answer her, whether to conceal or to tell her what had passed. I was more astonished than irritated, and more worried and perplexed than either. Here was an entanglement that might vastly amuse an audience in a comedy, but that, in its reality, was about as grave and perilous a complication as could befall us. With the velocity of thought, even while the girl's eyes were resting on mine and she was awaiting my reply, I reflected—first, that we were in

the power of this Captain, in respect, I mean, of his detention of us, while his vessel remained at sea; next, that he had fallen in love with Helga; that he meant to win her if he could; that his self-complacency would render him profoundly hopeful, and that he would go on keeping us on board his craft, under one pretext or another, in the conviction that his chance lay in time, with the further help that would come to him out of her condition as an orphan and penniless.

'What is it, Hugh?'

The sudden, brave, determined look that entered the girl's face, as though she had scented a danger, and had girded her spirit for it, determined me to give her the truth.

'Come on deck!' said I.

I took her hand, and we went up the little companion-steps.

Abraham was standing near the wheel, exchanging a word or two with the yellowskin who had replaced the fierce-faced creature of the earlier morning. There was warmth in the sun, and the sky was a fine clear blue dome, here and there freckled by

remains of the interlacery of cloud which had settled away into the west and north. The breeze was a soft, caressing air, with a hint of tropic breath and of the equatorial sea-perfume in it, and the round-bowed barque was sliding along at some four or five miles an hour, with a simmering noise of broken waters at her side. There was nothing in sight. Two or three copper-coloured men squatted, with palms and needles in their hands, upon a sail stretched along the waist; Nakier, on the forecastle-head, was standing with a yellow paw at the side of his mouth, calling instructions, in some Asiatic tongue, to one of the crew in the foretopmast cross-trees. I caught sight of Jacob, who was off duty, leaning near the galley door, apparently conversing with some man within. He nodded often, with an occasional sort of pooh-poohing flourish of his hand, puffing leisurely, and enjoying the sunshine. On catching sight of us he saluted with a flourish of his fist. This was the little picture of the barque as I remember it on stepping on deck with Helga that morning.

I took her to leeward, near the quarter-boat, out of hearing of Abraham and the helmsman.

'Now, what is it, Hugh?' said she.

'Why should you suppose there is anything wrong, Helga?'

'I see worry in your face.'

'Well,' said I, 'here is exactly how matters stand;' and with that I gave her, as best my memory could, every sentence of the Captain's conversation. She blushed, and turned pale, and blushed again; the shadows of a dozen emotions passed over her face in swift succession, and strongest among them was consternation.

'You were vexed with me for not being civil enough to him,' said she, 'and you would not understand that the civiller I was the worse it might be with us. Such a conceited, silly creature would easily mistake.'

'Could I imagine that he was in love with you?'

'Do not say that again!' she cried, with disgust in her manner, while she made as though to stop her ears.

'How could I guess?' I went on. 'His behaviour seemed to me full of benevolence, hospitality, grati-

fication at having us to talk to, with courtesy marked to you as a girl delivered from shipwreck and the hardships of the ocean.

'Will no ship come?' she cried, looking round the sea. 'The thought of remaining in this vessel, of having to disguise my feelings from that man for policy's sake, of being forced to sit in his company and listen to him, and watch his smile and receive his attentions and compliments, grows now intolerable to me!' and she brought her foot with a little stamp to the deck.

'Did you know you were so fascinating?' said I, looking at her. 'In less than a day you have brought this pale, stout Captain to your feet. In less than a day! Why, your charms have the potency of Prospero's magic. In "The Tempest," Ferdinand and Miranda fall deeply in love, plight their troth, bill and coo and gamble at chess, all within three hours. This little ship promises to be the theatre of another "Tempest," I fear.'

'Why did not you make him understand, resolutely *compel* him to understand, that it is our intention to return to England in the first ship?' she exclaimed,

with a glow in her blue eyes and a trace of colour in he cheeks and a tremor in her nostrils.

'Bluntness will not do. We must not convert this man into an enemy.'

'But he should be made to know that we mean to go home, and that his ideas——' she broke off, turning scarlet on a sudden, and looked down over the rail at the sea with a gleam of her white teeth showing upon the under-lip she bit.

'Helga,' said I, gently touching her hand, 'you are a better sailor than I. What is to be done?'

She confronted me afresh, her blue eyes darkened by the suppressed tears which lay close to them.

'Let us,' I continued, 'look this matter boldly in the face. He is in love with you.' For a second time she stamped her foot and bit her lip. 'I *must* say it, for there lies the difficulty. He hopes, by keeping you on board, to get you to like, and then, perhaps, listen to him. He will keep me, too, for the present—not because he is at all desirous of my company, but because he supposes that in your present mood, or rather attitude, of mind you would not stay without me, or at least alone with him.'

Her whole glowing countenance breathed a vehement 'No!'

'He need not speak passing ships unless he chooses to do so,' I went on; 'and I don't doubt he has no intention of speaking passing ships. What then How are we to get home?'

The expression on her face softened to a passage of earnest thought.

'We must induce him to steer his ship to Santa Cruz,' she exclaimed.

'You will have to act a part, then,' said I, after pausing to consider. 'He is no fool. Can you persuade him that you are in earnest in wishing to go the Cape in this ship? If not, his long nose will sniff the stratagem, and Santa Cruz in a few days be remoter than it now is.'

She reflected, and exclaimed: 'I must act a part if we are to get away from this vessel. What better chance have we than Santa Cruz? We must go ashore to make our purchases, and when ashore we must stop there. Yet what a degrading, what a ridiculous, what a wretched position to be in!' she cried. 'I would make myself hideous

with my nails to end this!' and with a dramatic gesture I should have deemed the little gentle creature incapable of, she put her fingers to her cheeks.

Abraham was now patrolling the deck to windward, casting his eyes with a look of importance up at the sails, and then directing them at the sea-line. He would, to be sure, find nothing to excite his curiosity in this subdued chat betwixt Helga and me to leeward. I had a mind to call him and explain our new and astonishing situation; then thought, 'No; let us mature some scheme first; he will help us better then, if he is able to help at all.' I leaned against the rail with folded arms, deeply considering. Helga kept her eyes upon me.

'We should not scheme as though Captain Bunting were a villain!' said I.

'He is a villain to his men!' she answered.

'He is no villain to us! What we do not like in him is his admiration of you. But this does not make a rascal of him!'

'He promised to transfer us to the first ship that passed!' said she.

'Shall you be well advised in acting a part?' I exclaimed. 'You are too frank, of too sweetly genuine a nature; you could not act; you could not deceive him!' said I, shaking my head.

The gratification my words gave her rose to her face in a little smile, that stayed for a moment like a light there.

'How frank and sweet I am I do not know,' said she artlessly; 'but I love your praise!'

'Madeira is yonder,' said I, nodding into the westward, 'some hundred odd miles distant, according to our friend's reckoning. If that be so, the Canaries must be within easy reach of two or three days, even at this dull pace. In fact, by to-morrow afternoon we could be having the Peak of Teneriffe blue in the heavens over the bow. We could not make the Captain believe, in that time, that we, who have been consumed with anxiety to return to England, have suddenly changed our mind and are willing to sail in his ship to wherever he may be bound. He would say to himself, "They want me to steer for Santa Cruz, where they will go ashore and leave me."'

'Yes, that is likely,' said the girl.

'We must not speculate and plan as though he were a villain,' I repeated. 'I believe the safe course will be to behave as though we did not doubt he will transfer us when the chance offers, and we must be ceaseless in our expression of anxiety to get home.'

'That will be genuine in us,' said Helga 'and I would rather act so. He will soon discover,' added she, colouring, 'that he is merely increasing the expenses of the voyage by detaining us.'

'He is not a rascal,' said I; 'he means very honestly; he wishes to make you his wife.' She raised her hand. 'Admiration in him has nimble feet. I have heard of love at first sight, but have scarcely credited it till now.' Her eyes besought me to be still, but I continued, urged, I believe, by some little temper of jealousy, owing to the thought of this Captain being in love with her, which was making me feel that I was growing very fond of her too. 'But his ideas are those of an honourable pious man,' said I. 'He is a widower—his daughter leads a lonely life at home—he knows as much about you as he could find out by plying us both with questions. He is certainly not a handsome man, but——' Here I stopped short.

She gazed at me with an expression of alarm.

'Oh, Hugh!' she cried, with touching plaintiveness of air and voice, 'you will remain my friend!'

'What have I said or done to make you doubt it, Helga?'

'What would you counsel?' she continued. 'Do you intend to side with him?'

'God forbid!' said I hastily.

She turned to the sea to conceal her face.

'Helga,' said I softly, for there was no chance for further tenderness than speech would convey, with Abraham stumping the deck to windward and a pair of dusky eyes at the wheel often turned upon us, 'I am sorry to have uttered a syllable to vex you. How much I am your friend you would know if you could see into my heart.'

She looked at me quickly, with her eyes full of tears, but with a grateful smile too. I was about to speak.

'Hush!' she exclaimed, and walked right aft, raising her hand to her brow, as though she spied something on the horizon astern.

'A delightful day—quite tropical,' exclaimed the

Captain, advancing from the poop ladder. 'What does Miss Nielsen see?'

'She is always searching for a sail,' said I.

'May I take it,' said he, 'that you have communicated to her what has passed between us?'

'Captain,' I said, 'you ask, and perhaps you expect too much. You have been a married man; you must therefore know the ropes, as the sailors say, better than I, who have not yet been in love. All that I can positively assure you is that Miss Nielsen is exceedingly anxious to return home with me to England.'

'It would be unreasonable in me to expect otherwise—for the present,' said he.

He left me and joined Helga, and I gathered, by the motions of his arms, that he was discoursing on the beauty of the morning. Presently he went below, and very shortly afterwards returned, bearing a little folding-chair and a cotton umbrella. He placed the chair near the skylight. Helga seated herself and took the umbrella from him, the shade of which she might find grateful, for the sun had now risen high in the heavens—there was heat in the light, with

nothing in the wind to temper the rays of the luminary. The Captain offered me a cigar with a bland smile, lighted one himself, and reposed in a careless, flowing way upon the skylight close to Helga; his long whiskers stirred like smoke upon his waistcoat to the blowing of the wind, his loose trousers of blue serge rippled, his chins seemed to roll as though in motion down betwixt the points of his collar. Clearly his study in the direction of posture was animated by a theory of careless, youthful, sailorly elegance; yet never did nautical man so completely answer to one's notions of a West-End hairdresser.

He was studiously courteous, and excessively anxious to recommend himself. I could not discover that he was in the least degree embarrassed by the supposition that I had repeated his conversation to Helga, though her manner must have assured him that I had told her everything. He was shrewd enough to see, however, that she was in a mood to listen rather than to be talked to, and so in the main he addressed himself to me. He asked me many questions about my lifeboat experiences: particularly wished to know if I thought that my boat, which had

been stove in endeavouring to rescue Miss Nielsen and her lamented father, would be replaced.

'Should a fund be raised,' he exclaimed, 'I beg that my name may not be omitted. My humble guinea is entirely at the service of the noble cause you represent. And what grand end may not a humble guinea be instrumental in promoting! It may help to rescue many wretched souls from the perdition that would otherwise await them were they to be drowned without having time to repent. This is lamentably true of sailors, Mr. Tregarthen. Scarcely a mariner perishes at sea who would not require many years of a devotional life to purge himself of his numerous vices. A humble guinea may also spare many children the misery of being fatherless, and it may shed sunshine upon humble homes by restoring husbands to their wives. You will kindly put me down for a humble guinea.'

I thanked him as though I supposed he was in earnest.

'You will never take charge of a lifeboat again, I hope,' said Helga.

'Why not? I like the work,' I answered.

'See what it has brought you to,' said she.

'Into enjoying the association and friendship of Miss Helga Nielsen!' exclaimed the Captain. 'Mr. Tregarthen will surely not regret *that* experience.'

'I feel that I am responsible for his being here, Captain Bunting,' said she, 'and I shall continue wretched till we are journeying to England.'

'I would gladly put my ship about and sail her home to oblige you,' exclaimed the Captain, 'but for one consideration: *not* the pecuniary loss that would follow—oh dear no!' he added, slowly shaking his head; 'it would too quickly sever me from a companionship I find myself happy in.'

She bit her lip, looking down with a face of dismay and chagrin, while he eyed her as though seeking for signs of gratification.

'The Canary Islands are within a short sail, I think, Captain,' said I.

'They are,' he responded.

'It would occasion no deviation, I think, for you to heave off some port there—call at Santa Cruz—and send us ashore in one of your excellent sharp-ended quarter-boats.'

'That would be giving me no time,' he answered without the least hesitation, and speaking and smiling in the politest, the most bland manner conceivable, 'to prevail upon you and Miss Nielsen to accompany me.'

'But to accompany you where, Captain?' cried I, warming up.

'To the Cape,' he answered.

'Ay, to the Cape,' said I; 'but I understood that you were to call there to discharge a small cargo and await orders.'

'You do not put it quite accurately,' said he, still oily to the last degree in his accent and expression. 'I own the greater proportion of this vessel, and my orders are my interests. When I have discharged this cargo I must look out for another.'

'Yes,' said I, 'and when you have got it, where is it going to carry you to?'

'Ah!' he exclaimed with a sigh, 'who can pierce the future? But who *would* pierce it? Depend upon it, young gentleman, that human blindness—I mean intellectual blindness——' he was proceeding; but I was in no humour to listen to a string of insipid, nasally pronounced commonplaces.

'The long and the short of it, Captain Bunting——' said I, finding an impulse in the soft but glowing eyes which Helga fixed upon me. But before I could proceed, Abraham came from the little brass rail which protected the break of the poop.

'Beg pardon, sir,' said he, addressing the Captain. 'That there chap Nakier has arsted to be allowed to say a word along wi' ye.'

'Where is he, Wise?' inquired the Captain, smiling into the boatman's face.

'He's a-waiting down on the quarter-deck, sir.'

'Call him.'

The 'boss' mounted the ladder. I was again impressed by the modest, the gentle air his handsome face wore. His fine liquid, dusky eyes glittered as he approached, but without in the least qualifying his docile expression. He pulled off his queer old soldier's cap, and stood looking an instant earnestly from me to Helga, before fastening his dark but brilliant gaze upon the Captain.

'What now, Nakier?'

'Dere's Goh Syn Koh says de men's dinner to-day is allee same as yesterday,' said the man.

'You mean pork and pease-soup?'

'Yaas, sah,' answered the fellow, nodding with an Eastern swiftness of gesture.

'Just so. Pork and pease-soup. You threw your allowance overboard yesterday. I have not ordered pork and pease-soup to be given to you two days running as a punishment!—oh dear no!' he went on with a greasy chuckle coming out, as it were, from the heart of his roll of chins. 'What! punish a crew by giving them plenty to eat? No, no! I simply intend that you and the rest of you shall know that I am captain of this ship, and that I must have my way!'

'Dat is proper,' exclaimed Nakier. 'No man ever say no to dat. But we no eat pork. We sooner eat dirt. We will not eat pease-soup; it is gravy of pork. We sooner drink tar.'

'Can you conceive such bigotry, such superstition, in men who are really, Miss Nielsen, not totally wanting in brains?' exclaimed the Captain, turning to Helga.

She looked away from him.

'Nakier,' he continued, 'you know, my good fellow, there must be a beginning. Have you ever tasted pork?'

'No, sah; it is against my religion!' cried the man vehemently.

'Your religion!' exclaimed the Captain. 'Alas, poor man! it is not religion—it is superstition of the most deplorable kind! and, since every captain stands as father to his crew, it is my duty, as your father for the time, to endeavour to win you, my children, for the time, to a knowledge of the truth!' He glanced askew at Helga, and proceeded: 'You will begin by eating each of you a mouthful of pork. I do not expect much—just one mouthful apiece to begin with. You may then follow on with a meal of salt-beef. The first step is everything. My idea is to deal with one superstition at a time. Why should pork be unfit for you? It is good for this lady; it is good for me; for this gentleman; for Wise there. Are we inferior to you, Nakier, that we should be willing to eat what you and my poor dark crew—dark in mind as in skin—profess to disdain?'

'We cannot eat pork,' said the man.

'Oh, I think so. You will try?'

'No, sah, no!' There was a sharp, wild gleam in his eyes as he pronounced these words, a look that

desperately contradicted his face, and his gaze at the Captain was now a steadfast stare.

'I desire,' continued the Captain, very blandly, 'to get rid of your deplorable prejudices as I would extinguish a side of bacon—rasher by rasher.' This he said with another leer at Helga. 'I have some knowledge of your faith. You need but make up your mind to know that what I do I do in the highest interests of my crew, and then I shall have every hope of getting you to listen to me, and of transforming you all into thoughtful Christian men before we reach Cape Town.'

'You will give us beef to-day, sah?'

'I think not, and if you throw your allowance overboard you shall have pork again to-morrow.'

'We did not sign your articles for dis,' said the man, who spoke English with a good accent.

'The articles provide for certain food,' answered the Captain, 'and that food is served out to you in very good measure. You will try—you will try to eat this pork; and when I learn that you have every-one of you swallowed one mouthful, you will find me indulgent in other directions, and ready to proceed

on the only course which can result in your salvation.'

'You will not give us beef to-day, sah?' said the man, shaking his head.

'Yes; but I must learn first that you have eaten of the pork. I will not insist upon the soup, but the pork you must eat!'

'No, sah!'

'You can go forward!'

'We signed for meat, sah: we cannot work on biscuit!'

'Meat you have, and excellent meat too! It is my business to make Christians of you. This little struggle is natural. You can go forward, I say!'

Helga, catching her breath as though to a sudden hysteric constriction of the throat, cried out, 'Captain, do not starve these men! Give them the food their religion permits them to eat!'

He looked at her for a moment or two in silence. It was hard to guess at his mind under that fixedly smiling countenance, but it seemed to me as though in those few moments of pause there was happening a really bitter conflict of thought in him.

'I know my duty!' he exclaimed. 'I know what my responsibilities are here: what is expected of me!' He reflected again. 'I shall have to render an account for my conduct, and human weakness is not forgiven in those who know what is right, and who are in a position to maintain, enforce, and confirm the right.' He paused again, then saying softly to Helga, 'For your sake!' he turned to Nakier. 'This lady wishes that the crew shall have the food their black and wicked superstitions suffer them to eat. Be it so—for to-day. Let the cook go to Mr. Jones's cabin for the key of the harness-cask.'

Without a word, the man rounded upon his heel and went forward.

The Captain gazed at Helga while he pensively pulled his whiskers.

'It is just possible,' said he, 'that you may not be very intimately acquainted with the character of the religion I am endeavouring to correct in those poor dark fellow-creatures of mine.'

'I dare say they are very happy in their belief,' she answered.

He arched his eyebrows and spread his waistcoat,

and had fetched a deep breath preparatory to delivering one of his fathoms of tedious commonplace, but his eye was at that instant taken by the clock under the skylight.

'Ha!' he cried, 'I must fetch my sextant; it is drawing on to noon. I will bring you an instrument, Miss Nielsen; we will shoot the sun together.'

'No, if you please,' she exclaimed.

He entreated a little, but her *no* was so resolutely pronounced that, contenting himself with a bland flourish of his hand, he went below.

'What is to be done?' whispered Helga. 'We shall not be able to induce him to land us at Santa Cruz. Is he mad, do you think?'

'No more than I am,' said I. 'One vocation is not enough for the fellow. There are others like him in my country of Great Britain. What a sea-captain, to be sure! How well he talks—I mean for a sea-captain! He has a good command of words. I wager he has made more than one rafter echo in his day. And he is sincere too. I saw the struggle in him when you asked that the men should have their bit of beef.'

'How am I to make him understand,' said she, 'that nothing can follow his keeping us here?'

'At all events,' I exclaimed, "we can do nothing until we sight a ship heading for home.'

'That is true,' she answered.

'We came aboard yesterday,' I continued, 'since when nothing has been sighted, therefore, be the disposition of the man what it will, he could not down to this moment have put us in the way of getting home. But here he comes.'

He rose through the companion hatch, with a sextant in his hand, and, stepping over to the weather side of the deck, fell to ogling the sun that flamed over the weather-bow.

END OF VOL. II.

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